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**| RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Using Google Meet in Teaching English at University: An Insight from Lecturers' Perspectives

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**| ABSTRACT**

Under the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic, most education and training activities throughout the world have quickly switched to an online mode or, recently, hybrid mode, thanks to various available online conferencing platforms. Among these, Google Meet was one of the most popular platforms for emergency remote teaching in Vietnam. However, in its actual usage, Google Meet still puts numerous limitations on the online teaching and learning process, especially for English courses. In this study, lecturers' perceptions of using Google Meet for English courses were deeply explored through a survey and semi-structured interviews. The findings show discrepancies in participants' perspectives of using Google Meet related to the app's functionality and its support for synchronous teaching and learning. This research can provide insights into the use of Google Meet in English online learning in Vietnam's tertiary education and serve as recommendations for improving the use of online conferencing platforms in post-pandemic teaching and learning of English.

**| KEYWORDS**

English teaching and learning, emergency remote teaching, Google Meet, online learning

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### 1. Introduction

With the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic across the globe, education institutions, both state-run and private, have turned to online teaching via virtual conference platforms. Among them is Google Meet, a platform known for its simplicity, user-friendliness and convenience, which, unlike Zoom or Microsoft Team, allows users to hold online conferences directly on web-browsers without having to install any additional program. This is probably a major reason behind the popularity of this platform, making it a dominant tool for online teaching at USSH-VNUHCM.

However, Google Meet is not without shortcomings. Firstly, the accounts given by USSH-VNUHCM to its lecturers allow them to use the platform free of charge but with limited functionality. To be precise, some features necessary for online teachings, such as creating breakout-rooms or polls, are not available on these accounts. Moreover, despite its simplicity, users still need a certain level of technical skills to use Google Meet effectively and deal with issues such as sharing audio with learners, choosing graphic input, etc., which may arise during online lessons. Finally, to use Google Meet to its full potential, users need to know how to combine it with other services in Google's ecosystem, such as Google Calendar, Google Classroom, Google Drive, etc.

Moreover, although there has been much research into the application of information technology, especially virtual conference platforms, to teaching and learning, not many studies consider the specific context of teaching/learning English, and hardly any of them focus on the effectiveness of using Google Meet in teaching/learning English in Vietnam. Therefore, the research team decided to carry out the present study in order to shed some light on the aforementioned issue.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Google Meet

Google Meet is a virtual video conferencing service from Google and fully integrated into Google Workspace. Google Meet has been free for all users who have a Gmail account since April 2020. Anyone with a Google account can create an online meeting on Google Meet for up to 24 hours with up to 100 participants. Further, the advanced feature of Google Meet (with payments) for enterprises, schools and organizations using Google Workspace allows up to 250 participants and 100 viewers in the same domain. Google Workspace users can also keep the content of online meetings confidential and secure by setting passwords for participants. They can make use of a noise cancellation feature to reduce the sound surrounding the participants.

The users can download and use Google Meet with mobile devices on iOS and Android or use it directly on computers with the web browser. They can also use Google Meet in Gmail and schedule upcoming meetings on Google Calendar. Google Meet allows users to communicate by voice, video and share screen to present a document, worksheet or make presentation. Besides, Google Meet creates detailed subtitles based on the presenters' voices và chosen language. It also provides HD video recording with 720 p resolution. Another worth-noticing function is that it encrypts all of the meetings.

Google Meet appeared in February 2017 to enhance and replace the Hangouts application. However, in 2020, Google Meet became more and more popular due to the influence of Covid 19 pandemic. From January to April 2020, its frequency of use increased by more than 30% (Boland, H., 2020). Until the last week of April, the daily traffic to Google Meet was up to 100 million people, and the number increased 3 million people every day (Boland, 2020a).

In the four breakouts of Covid 19 in Vietnam, since March 2020, the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh have applied Google Meet in online teaching and learning for all training programs with the advanced account for all of the lecturers.

### 2.2. Video conferencing

Video conferencing or virtual conferencing is a kind of technology that allows users from different places to participate in meetings without travelling to the same place with the connection of sound and video. It is currently used mainly on online platforms and is popular in enterprises and educational organizations for distance meetings and training. The widely used Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype, and Adobe Connect are examples of this technology.

The appearance of virtual conferencing since the XX century benefits education and training services, especially distant programs. Video conferencing is widely used for providing learners from different places with lessons and lectures (Knipe, D., & Lee, M., 2002). In terms of the benefits of video conferencing in teaching, Cochrane (1996, p. 318) assumed:

*The motives for using videoconferencing are varied and include providing access to learners in remote areas, ensuring that students are exposed to a technology which is increasingly used in professional practice, and easing course delivery problems when separate institutions merge*

Freeman (1998) similarly supposed that using video conferencing assists lecturers in duplicating their lectures, reducing the teaching time, and saving more time for preparing materials; furthermore, the learners have an equal chance to approach the lecturers and the course.

When it comes to foreign language learning, in a study, Wang (2004) confirmed that using video conferencing provides an effective learning environment in which the learners not only communicate with the target language but can also use non-verbal language such as facial expression and body movement. In another study about syntax negotiation, Lee (2006) found out that video conferencing provides a less-pressure environment for communication than face-to-face one, thanks to its indirectness. In a recent study on the learners' attitudes towards the use of video conferencing for English learning, Jung, S. K. (2009) discovered the results that most of them believed that the use of video conferencing could replace the direct interaction between learners and foreign teachers, which is beneficial regarding time and space issues; they can use the feature of text chat to reduce their anxiety. Overall, the study has proved that it is an effective tool for enhancing learners' fluency in speaking English. This shows that video conferencing tools bring several benefits to the teaching and learning of foreign languages.

However, there are some opposing views about the use of video conferencing in education. Mason (2013) assumed that it was not appropriate with the lecturing method used in higher education and supposed it was more suitable in classes for young learners. Meanwhile, Laurillard (1993) stated that it supports lecturing well since it is both a presentation and discussion tool. Although Freeman (1998) assumed that it brought some benefits, the researcher stated that both learners and lecturers felt the interaction and learning activities were not improved through video conferencing. The activities and interaction were at a slow pace, and more time was spent on technical problems and the learners' neglectedness, especially in remote areas.

Some others also questioned the teaching and learning quality when using virtual conferencing. Knipe, D., & Lee, M. (2002, p.302) opined that "recent studies on videoconferencing seem to concentrate more on the practical advantages that the medium has, rather than focusing on the quality of teaching and learning". In a study, Bollom et al. (1989) pointed out ample disadvantages of

virtual technology besides its practical benefits. The learners have less chance for interaction and discussion since they are hesitant to pose a question and have a discussion. The learners and lecturers stated that virtual classes helped them save time and money on travelling, as well as improve the image of the universities by applying a new approach to education services. However, teaching assistants in the study by Bollom and partners (1989) did not show that virtual learning was effective. One of them talked too much, and the learners could hardly find time to interact with their classmates and the teaching assistants. Concerning disadvantages, Bottom et al. (1989) argued that virtual technologies are influenced by the traditional form of face-to-face communication that is often used as a measure, making it second place.

Another study conducted by Freeman (1998) with the participation of 330 university students showed that the lecturers using video conferencing had to prepare the materials and plan for the lectures effectively; they were also dependent on other people, limiting their teaching styles and creating more chances for neglectedness in the learning environment as well as pressure from the mentioned factors. Regardless of those issues, the study results showed no significant difference in final exam scores between the control group, learning without the use of video conferencing and the experimental group, with the assistance of virtual conferencing.

In another study, Knipe, D., & Lee, M. (2002) examined the teaching quality and learning experiences in using video conferencing compared with traditional classes. The result showed that distance learning through video conferencing created a different learning experience from that in traditional classes. In terms of learning, learners in traditional classes reported that they received more information and explanations and more opportunities to work in groups as well as make a presentation. However, distant learners felt that they were supported by lecturers and could take more notes. On the contrary, learners in online classes felt that they were lost and their learning time was reduced.

In the context of Vietnam, a recent study by Luong Dinh Hai and partners conducted in 2020 studied the learners' attitudes towards learning through virtual learning tools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The result showed that the learners had a neutral attitude towards the use of video conferencing in learning and teaching and assumed that it was both a temporary solution and a compulsory one during the period of pandemic and quarantine.

Recently, in 2021, in Vietnam, another group of researchers, including Le Huu Nghia and his partners, studied the lecturers' and learners' viewpoints about the quality of software and the effectiveness of the online learning and teaching practice at the Faculty of Traditional Medicine, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City. The result showed the effectiveness of the online learning and teaching software was at a good level, with the rate of presenting lectures at nearly 77% and absorbing the lessons at over 80%.

The above studies provide different viewpoints about the effectiveness of applying video conferencing in learning and teaching, especially language learning and teaching. However, these ways of evaluation were not systematic and comprehensive since they were not based on any certain criteria for assessment for all of the aspects of teaching-learning and the use of virtual conferencing. With the advancement of technology, several video conferencing tools were developed with ample features and their own strengths as well as weaknesses. Therefore, it is necessary to figure out and evaluate each of the tools. The above-mentioned studies employed context-specific tools, and no studies were found to be specifically carried out for Google Meet – a tool which is widely used nowadays all over the world and at EF. This forms the rationale for the current study.

### ***2.3. Assessment criteria for video conferencing tools in classrooms***

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of virtual teaching tools, including virtual conferencing, several researchers suggested different criteria. Based on conducted studies, Lauren M. Anstey and Gavan P.L. Watson (2018) designed and suggested the assessment criteria as follows:

1. Functionality (Scale, Ease of use, Tech support)
2. Accessibility (Accessibility standard, User-focused participation, Required equipment, Cost of use)
3. Technical (Integration/ Embedding within a Learning Management System (LMS), Desktop / Laptop/ Operating systems, Browser, Additional downloads)
4. Mobile design (Access, functionality, offline access)
5. Privacy, Data protection, and Rights (Sign up/ sign in, Data privacy and ownership, Archiving, saving, and exporting Data)
6. Social Presence (Collaboration, User accountability, Diffusion)
7. Teaching Presence (Facilitation, Customization, Learning Analytics)
8. Cognitive Presence (Enhancement of cognitive tasks, High order thinking, Metacognitive engagement)

From another approach, in the context of Vietnam, Le Huu Nghia et al. (2021) used 5 criteria to assess the quality of online teaching software at the Faculty of Traditional Medicine, University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Ho Chi Minh City. The criteria include the following:

1. The quality of sound transmission
2. The quality of image transmission
3. The user friendliness
4. The interaction between lecturers and learners
5. The sign-in process

Additionally, in order to evaluate the teaching quality using online tools, two other criteria were included by Le Huu Nghia et al. (2021): the level of lecture delivery and the level of lecture reception. The criteria, despite its clear distinction, cannot cover all the relevant aspects of online teaching, especially those that involve video conferencing.

Recognizing the necessity of practical assessment criteria, more comprehensive and can target all of the aspects of using video conferencing tools for teaching and learning, including those of foreign languages like English. Based on the studies carried out and practical experiences, we have selected, standardized and developed a group of criteria for evaluating the effectiveness and challenges of using Google Meet for teaching and learning English at our faculty. The criteria include the following:

1. The simplicity and convenience of use
2. The interaction between lecturers and classmates
3. The compatibility with different devices, platforms and systems
4. The capacity to import, export and share data
5. The data and information security
6. The support for varied teaching activities
7. The support for classroom and learner management

### **3. Research methodology**

#### **3.1. Research questions:**

To achieve the research goal, the current study aimed to seek answers to the subsequent research queries:

1. What was the degree of lecturers' enjoyment in using Google Meet for learning English online during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. Do lecturers have the desire to utilize Google Meet for online English learning in the future?
3. What was the lecturers' perception of the effectiveness of Google Meet features in learning English online?

#### **3.2. Participants**

Participants of the study were 31 lecturers conveniently recruited from the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University in Ho Chi Minh City, who were recruited conveniently. These participants were divided by their age, their English teaching experience, and their online teaching experience before the Covid 19 pandemic. Regarding their age, over one third of the participants were in their twenties, while just under a quarter of them were over 40 (see Figure 1)

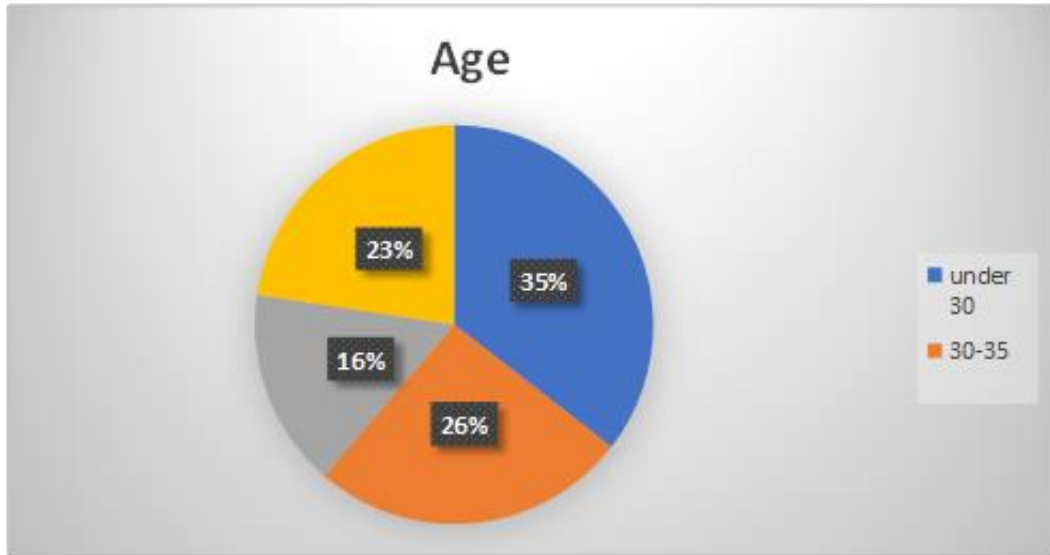


Figure 1. Age of Participants

Regarding their general teaching experience, less than half of the participants (40 percent) had a more-than-10-year experience teaching English, whereas around 25 percent of them had taught English for less than 5 years. (see Figure 2).

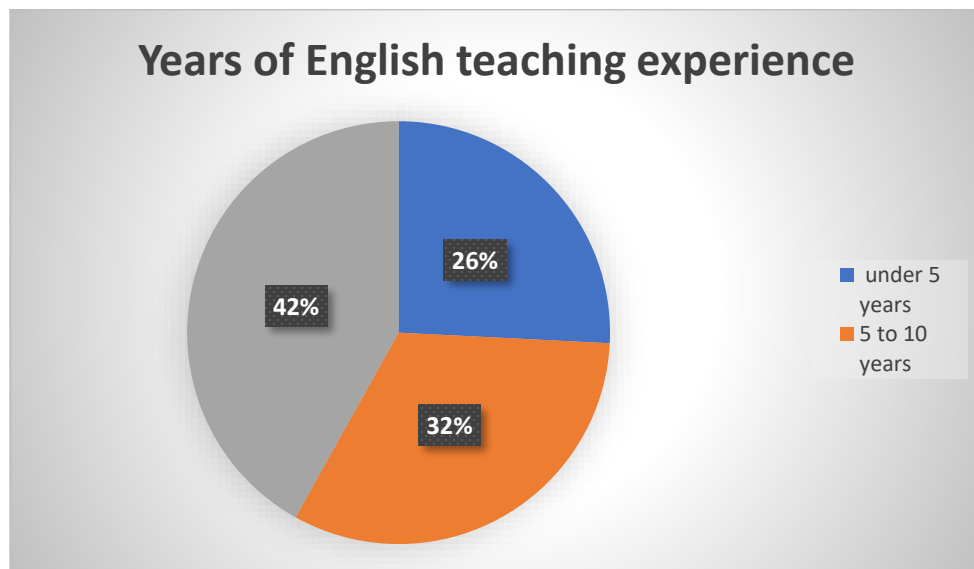


Figure 2. Participants' Years of English Teaching Experience

In terms of their online teaching experience, more than half (55%) of the participants confirmed that they had previous experience, whereas the rest (45%) had no experience in digital teaching (see Figure 3)

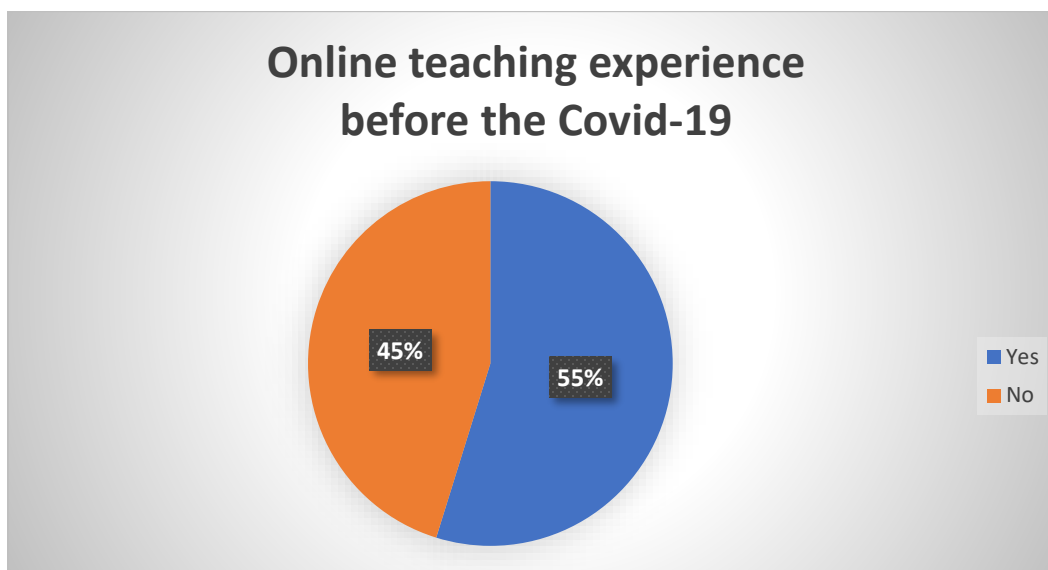


Figure 3. Participants' Online Teaching Experience Before the covid 19

### 3.3. Research design

In this current study, a mixed methods approach, which involves a process of generating and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010), is utilized with a stronger focus on quantitative data. It is the intricacy of the teaching and learning process that needs a multiple approach research design instead of a single set of data to enhance the reliability of answers to the research questions. As stated by Creswell and Clark (2011), using the incorporation of various data sets, which are collected at distinct phases in a study, can help to provide more detailed information about the circumstance in question. This is useful because for multi-dimensional constructs in this study. The employment of mixed methods can give a more exhaustive description and more insightful understanding of the research problem than using a method alone.

In this regard, the current study utilized the sequential explanatory approach, characterized by two distinct phases: an initial quantitative phase followed by a second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis. As a research method, this explanatory approach is often the most suitable design when the researcher wants to triangulate different data sources to gain a complete understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The approach involves first collecting and analyzing quantitative data and then using qualitative data to further explain and enrich the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

### 3.4. Data collection

In order to address the research questions about teachers' evaluation of the use of Google Meet as an online conferencing platform for English teaching and learning, we utilized a questionnaire survey in the first phase. This research tool, as Trochim and Nonnelly (2001) suggest, is particularly useful in generating data from a large group of participants. One other significant benefit of the use of this research instrument is its flexibility in collecting large quantitative data within a short period of time.

A five-point Likert scale questionnaire for teacher participants was designed based on criteria proposed by Lauren and Gavan (2018), including functionality, accessibility, technical, mobile design, privacy, data protection and rights, social presence, teaching presence, and cognitive presence. The questionnaires comprise 38 question items, of which the first three gather personal information about age, years of experience in language teaching and learning and experience in online teaching and learning via Google Meet before the pandemic. After being developed, the questionnaire was administered to the participants via Google form.

For the second phase of data collection, we conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers who agreed to be involved in an interview after the questionnaire. Interviews are a widely used research method in qualitative research for their ability to provide in-depth information about the experiences and perspectives of individuals (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the use of interviews in research is grounded in the assumption that individuals have unique perspectives and experiences that cannot be captured by other research methods. Through interviews, researchers can gather rich and detailed data about a participant's attitudes, beliefs, and experiences related to a particular topic (Seidman, 2013). For these reasons, interviews were useful in this current study as they could provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of teachers' experiences and perspectives on using Google Meet to teach English online.

**3.5. Data analysis**

After collecting data, quantitative data is entered, scanned, coded and analyzed using SPSS version 24 software, while the qualitative data is analyzed using the thematic analysis method to identify common themes in textual data. Finally, the study triangulates the two types of results to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Trochim & Nonnelly, 2001).

**4. Results**

**4.1. Teachers' enjoyment of using Google Meet**

Table 1 describes how lecturers in this study enjoyed using Google Meet while teaching English online. As can be seen from the table, lecturers showed high consensus on their enjoyment of their use of Google Meet to teach English online (M=3.55, SD=.995). Notably, nearly half of the participating lecturers (45.2%) agreed that they enjoyed using Google Meet in their English teaching. A similar figure (41.9%) of the lecturers had a neutral attitude towards their Google Meet use. However, a minority (over 12 percent) of the lecturers did not show interest in their use of Google Meet.

**Table 1.** Lecturers' perception of Google Meet functions

Did you enjoy teaching English online with Google Meet?		Frequency (F)	Percent (P)	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
	Disagree	4	12.9		
	Neutral	13	41.9	3.55	.995
	Agree	7	22.6	(Agree)	
	Strongly agree	7	22.6		
	Total	31	100.0		

**4.2. Lecturers' intention to use Google Meet in future**

Table 2 shows lecturers' intention to use Google Meet in their online English teaching in future. From the table, it is striking that most lecturers (45.2%) agreed that they wanted to use Google Meet for their future teaching (M=3.3 SD=1.145). This is followed by over one-third of the participants who were undecided as to whether to use Google Meet for their English instruction in the future. In contrast, a smaller proportion (19.4%) denied their intention to use Google Meet for their online teaching purpose in the future.

**Table 2.** Lecturers' future intention to use Google Meet

Do you want to use Google Meet to teach English online in the future?		Frequency (F)	Percent (P)	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation (SD)
	Strongly disagree	2	6.5		
	Disagree	4	12.9		
	Neutral	11	35.5	3.39	1.145
	Agree	8	25.8	(Agree)	
	Strongly agree	6	19.4		
	Total	31	100.0		

### 4.3. Lecturers' Perception of Google Meet Functions

**Table 3.** Lecturers' perception of Google Meet functions

Functions of Google Meet	N	Mean (M)	Range	Std. Deviation (SD)
1 The simplicity and convenience of use	31	4.46	Agree	.48
2 The interaction between lecturers and classmates	31	3.74	Agree	.78
3 The compatibility with different devices, platforms and systems	31	3.91	Agree	.67
4 The capacity to import, exporting and sharing data	31	3.82	Agree	.74
5 The data and information confidentiality	31	3.63	Agree	1.00
6 The support for varied teaching activities	31	3.78	Agree	.69
7 The support for classroom and learner management	31	2.89	Neutral	.79

Table 3 provides information about how lecturers perceived various functions of Google Meet to teach English online. Overall, the means of all the functions range from 2.89 to 4.46. It is evident that participants considered 6 out of 7 aspects of Google Meeting satisfying for their online teaching of English ( $3.63 \leq M \leq 4.46$ ). Among them, the simplicity and convenience of use of Google Meet ranked first ( $M=4.46$ ,  $SD=.48$ ). This was explained by most participants (four out of five lecturers) in the interview that Google had a simple and easy-to-use interface which enabled them to use it without prior training. Three of them also added that Google Meet could be used right on the web browser, and no application instalment was required. As for data and information security of Google Meet, it was the least appreciated and received the most various evaluations ( $M=3.63$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ). This was confirmed by all the participants in the interview, who shared that they found it challenging to restrict the access of strangers to their meetings on Google Meet. In terms of the last feature, lecturers held a neutral view about the capability of Google Meet to support classroom and learner management ( $M=2.89$ ). This opinion was similar to that of three interviewed lecturers who asserted that functions of Google Meet could aid in classroom and learner management only to an adequate extent. To summarize, Google Meet, from the perspective of the lecturers, showed tremendous strength in its simple and easy-to-use interface; nevertheless, it was still in need of improvement in its support for data security and management of classrooms and learners.

### 5. Discussions

The findings suggest that a majority of the participating English language lecturers enjoyed using Google Meet for their online teaching. The high level of agreement among the lecturers is noteworthy, with nearly half of the participants showing a positive attitude towards Google Meet. This indicates that Google Meet has the potential to be a useful tool for online English language teaching, as it is easily accessible and user-friendly. The results are in line with previous research, such as Wang (2004), Lee (2006), and Jung, S. K. (2009), that have highlighted the benefits of using video conferencing tools like Google Meet for online teaching.

The findings also suggest that a significant number of lecturers expressed an intention to use Google Meet for their online English language teaching in the future. This positive attitude towards Google Meet may be due to the convenience and flexibility it offers, as well as its potential to facilitate interaction and engagement among students. However, it is important to note that a substantial proportion of the lecturers were undecided about using Google Meet in the future, indicating that further research and training may be needed to fully realize the potential benefits of this tool.

The results suggest that lecturers perceived Google Meet to be a useful tool for online English language teaching, with most lecturers rating the various functions of Google Meet as satisfactory. The simplicity and convenience of the use of Google Meet were particularly appreciated by the lecturers, as it allowed them to easily conduct online English lessons without requiring any prior training. However, the data and information confidentiality of Google Meet received mixed evaluations, indicating that improvements may be needed to ensure greater security and privacy for users. Additionally, lecturers held a neutral view about the capability of Google Meet to support classroom and learner management, indicating that further development and enhancement may be required to fully meet the needs of lecturers and students.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that Google Meet is a useful tool for online English language teaching, as it is easily accessible and user-friendly. However, further research and development may be needed to fully realize the potential benefits of this tool, particularly in terms of improving data security and management of classrooms and learners.



## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that English language lecturers generally have a positive attitude towards using Google Meet for their online teaching, perceiving it as user-friendly and intending to use it in the future. However, concerns were raised regarding data and information security as well as the platform's capacity to support classroom and learner management.

To address these issues, Google Meet should be developed with more stringent access controls and improved security features. It is also recommended that teacher training and support be provided to ensure that educators are knowledgeable about using Google Meet and can utilize its features effectively, particularly with regard to data and information security.

In terms of classroom and learner management, additional features could be added to Google Meet, such as breakout rooms, whiteboards, and polling tools, to help lecturers manage their online classrooms more efficiently. Google Meet could also develop features to enable lecturers to monitor students' engagement during online classes and provide real-time feedback.

Furthermore, other stakeholders in the field, such as school, faculty, or department management, should take into account the findings of this study when selecting Google Meet or similar video-conferencing platforms for their virtual or blended English language programs.

Overall, the results indicate that Google Meet has the potential to be a valuable tool for online English language teaching. By addressing the identified issues, Google Meet can further enhance the user experience for both lecturers and students, providing a reliable and efficient platform for online teaching and learning.

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