

# TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS REGARDING ONLINE PLATFORMS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LISTENING: A CASE STUDY AT A UNIVERSITY IN INDONESIA

Hustarna<sup>1)</sup>, Mursid Saleh<sup>2)</sup>, Sri Wuli Fitriati<sup>3)</sup>, Zulfa Sakhiyyah<sup>4)</sup>

*1,2,3,4 ) Department of English Education*

*Universitas Negeri Semarang*

*Semarang, Indonesia*

*[arna\\_unja@students.unnes.ac.id](mailto:arna_unja@students.unnes.ac.id), [mursids@hotmail.com](mailto:mursids@hotmail.com), [SriWuli.Fitriati@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:SriWuli.Fitriati@mail.unnes.ac.id), [zulfa.sakhiyya@mail.unnes.ac.id](mailto:zulfa.sakhiyya@mail.unnes.ac.id)*

## Abstract

Knowledge and beliefs are two aspects of cognition that play very significant roles in the teaching and learning process. Many studies show that what teachers know and believe has a high impact on their classroom. This study examined university teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding online platforms in teaching English listening. Using a case study design, we examined two university teachers teaching English listening online. The finding showed that participants' knowledge and beliefs about online platforms for teaching English listening align with their teaching practices. However, the implementation of online platforms was still considered less optimal. Finally, the implications for teacher development are highlighted.

**Keywords-** online platforms, listening, knowledge, beliefs

## Introduction

Global health crisis because of Corona virus 2019 (Covid-19) has forced many countries to change their policies regarding many things such as politics, health, economics, and education. For the educational sector, many countries, including Indonesia, have decided to change the teaching and learning platform from offline to online for all levels of education. The change of the platform, from face-to-face interactions in traditional classrooms to online interactions, requires all teachers to adjust many aspects of their instruction. Changing the way the instruction is delivered make teachers need to reconsider knowledge and skill they need to have for teaching online as Tschida et al. (2016) noted that "teaching online is not as simple as transferring face-to-face courses to the Internet (p. 666)". Online teachers need to prepare all things well to make the process of teaching and learning run smoothly, including deciding what technologies and tools (online platforms) they should use to facilitate the teaching and learning process (Susilowati, 2020).

Online platforms are internet-based platforms used for a variety of purposes.

Some are designed for social media (e.g., Facebook, Whatsapp, Line) and business purposes (Lazada, Shopee, Bukalapak). Some others are specifically created for educational purposes (e.g., Moodle, Google Classroom, Schoology) (Bickerstaff, 2020), and there are also some created for other purposes other than the already three mentioned. Teachers' consideration of what online platforms to use is influenced by their knowledge and beliefs.

Borg (2019) argued that knowledge and beliefs are parts of cognition that are intertwined with each other, and separating them seems to be a "daunting undertaking" (Pajares, 1992, p.4). However, Pajares and some other scholars have tried to differentiate the two concepts. Knowledge is based on objective fact, while beliefs are based on judgment and evaluation (Pajares, 1992, p.313). Beliefs are created through a process of enculturation and social construction. Compared to knowledge, beliefs have more power in leading someone to do something. Meanwhile, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) define beliefs as "judgments and evaluations that we make about ourselves, others, and the world around us (p.79)". Furthermore, "teacher

beliefs may include subjective theories about how students learn, what a teacher should or should not do, and which instructional strategies work effectively” (Jääskelä et al., 2017, p. 199). Knowledge and beliefs are two aspects of teachers' mental lives, which have a high impact on how teachers integrate technology in their classroom (Gilakjani, 2012; Taimalu & Luik, 2019).

The effectiveness of the use of online platforms for online instruction can be influenced by many things. One of them might be determined by how much knowledge and what beliefs teachers have regarding the online platforms. Inadequate knowledge regarding the technology tools will affect the process of online teaching and learning. Moreover, for teaching listening, teachers need extra effort since this skill is considered one of the complex skills to teach (Alrawashdeh & Al-zayed, 2017; Gomez Martinez, 2010; Hwaider, 2017; Walker, 2014). This view is seen when it was taught offline. When it is taught online, there might be more challenges teachers will encounter. Therefore, we think it is important to investigate teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding online platforms in teaching English listening. The information gathered from this research contributes to gaining teachers' understanding of online platforms they should use and the challenges they found when using such platforms. Their experience might give insight to other teachers about online platforms they should use. Finally, the finding of this research also might give information about their professional development need regarding technology tools they need to know and use in order to improve the quality of the online teaching and learning process, specifically for listening skills, and to design effective teacher education for teaching English listening in the future as what current students experience now might impact the way they teach in the future.

### **Methodology**

We conducted this research using a case study design to investigate teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding online platforms for teaching English listening. The participants were two university teachers teaching English listening online, selected purposively. In addition, each of them taught listening in a team. They handled the class half-semester each. Furthermore, both of them have started teaching online since the covid-19 pandemic emerged in Indonesia in 2020.

The instruments we used were observations and an interview. The observations were conducted after the two participants permitted the researchers to observe their classes. We conducted the observations to see online platforms the participants used, how they operated them, and their problems when using such platforms. The observations were conducted by the first researcher by joining all online listening classes held for about seven meetings by each participant. We saved the data of the observations by recording all activities in the online platforms used. The audio recordings were then transcribed to make us more familiar with the data and easier to identify the important things needed for the analysis. In addition, for non-audio data from the observations, we saved them by making screenshots for all online teaching and learning interactions. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted after the participants finished their classes or after the whole instruction ended. We prepared the questions beforehand to make the interview run smoothly. We started with questions regarding their listening instructional background, followed by questions about their knowledge and beliefs about online platforms they used for online listening instruction, and ended with questions related to their problems when teaching listening using online platforms.

We conducted the interviews mainly using English. We used Bahasa Indonesia only to clarify questions that seemed to be hard to be understood by the

participants, and the participants were free to answer the questions using both English and Bahasa Indonesia. Furthermore, we conducted the interview online using the Zoom application since they live in different islands, and the research was conducted when the Covid-19 pandemic has been taking place. The data from the interviews were also recorded automatically via the Zoom application and transcribed verbatim by one of the researchers. Each interview lasted around one hour.

We analyzed the data from observations and interviews using thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clark (2006). The analysis started with intensively reading all texts and watch the recordings several times while noting extracts for key ideas regarding each research question. Then, the initial codes from the data were produced and followed by creating potential themes from the extracts gathered. The potential themes were reviewed to determine the actual themes that should be included in the analysis. After that, a detailed analysis was conducted to obtain the findings of the research. The last is writing the report by providing sufficient evidence based on the data analysis result.

### **Finding and Discussion**

Our findings are structured around three questions that we addressed for this research. They covered questions regarding (1) teachers' knowledge and beliefs on what online platforms they used for teaching listening, (2) teachers' practice in using online platforms for teaching listening, and (3) problems they encountered when using the online platforms for teaching listening.

#### *1. teachers' knowledge and beliefs on what platforms to use for teaching listening online*

Two university teachers teaching English listening online participated in this research. We named them Ms. Ana and Mr. Jhon. The interview result revealed that

teaching online was new for the two participants. They admitted that they did not have enough knowledge about how to teach online, more specifically for teaching English listening. Regarding online platforms used, Ms. Ana knows more online platforms to use than does Mr. Jhon. Ms. Ana knows and believes that she can use Zoom, Whatsapp, YouTube links, and LMS. While Mr. Jhon only knows two applications, i.e., Zoom and Whatsapp, that he can use for teaching English listening online. He believes that there are other online platforms to use, but he said that he did not know what they are. In addition, for teaching listening online, he said that he only used Whatsapp. It is because he has not been familiar with Zoom features, and he was informed by his colleagues that Zoom takes more internet data and is too heavy for students. The evidence can be found in the following extracts containing their answers when the researcher asked about what online platforms a lecturer can use for teaching listening online and what online platforms they have used for teaching listening online.

Ms. Ana

"h-m, we can use YouTube links. For example mmm... we give them YouTube links mmm... but I haven't tried to use them. But I think they can be used. For example, I make a video, and then I ask students to participate by giving comments regarding the video in the comment menu of YouTube. Yeah, just like that. The main platform is Zoom. Zoom was used for online, face-to-face interactions, then Schoology for sharing mmm...discourses... and then also for students to submit their assignments. And to post questions and materials for semester tests and the mid-term test. Yeah, I use mmm... multiple platforms, not only Zoom, as I told you before. So, mmm... when I have problems with Zoom, I

change it into another platform, that is Whatsapp, and sometimes I also use LMS.” (Interview, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

Ms. Ana believes that Zoom and Whatsapp are two online platforms that are familiar, not only for her but also for her students. She thinks that the two platforms are easy to operate. Therefore, she decided to use those two for teaching listening online, added by using LMS Schoology. In her view, Schoology is effective in recording materials, students' assignments, and students' scores as well. She knows that there is another platform she might use, such as google meet, but she did not use it because she considered that it was not easy to operate. She ever tried to use it but failed.

Mr. Jhon

“For listening, it is a bit difficult. Actually, Whatsapp is suitable. Good enough. Zoom... well, I don't know how to share audio using Zoom. I would like to learn how to use it actually. When using Whatsapp, I just can share videos. Students listen, then we can xx. It can be like that. But for Zoom, I have not learned it in detail. Then, students often accidentally leave it or cannot join it. Maybe it is because Zoom is new. So, I think Whatsapp is suitable enough. We can use others other than Whatsapp, but I don't know what. It is simpler (Whatsapp). I heard that Zoom mmm... spends much internet quota for forty-five minutes. It can cost fifty thousand. That's what I heard, but I don't know exactly the truth.” (Interview, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

Mr. Jhon decided to use Whatsapp because he believes that the platform is simple to use. He does not use other online platforms since he does not have enough knowledge yet about them. What he knows is what he heard from others that ever used Zoom that Zoom is expensive.

## *2. Teachers' practice in using the online platforms for teaching listening*

Based on the result of the interview and observations, it is found that both teachers have not optimally used the features of the online platforms they used. Ms. Ana used online platforms in accordance with what she has stated in the interview. She has really used the three platforms she mentioned, i.e., Zoom, Whatsapp, and LMS Schoology. However, the observation data confirmed that she did not use all features available in Zoom when she was teaching. She just used Zoom to transfer the material and to discuss with the students; she just did it as she did in the offline classroom. She asked students to answer by mentioning their names directly. She did not use some features in Zoom that can be used to make the interactions more interactive and interesting such as emojis, whiteboard, etc. The chat menu was seldom used. She actually could use that feature to accommodate students who had problems with asking directly to her so that the students kept having a chance to interact with Ms. Ana and other students. She said in the interview that Zoom was familiar for her and students, but in fact, most of the students also did not optimally use the features of Zoom, and unfortunately, Ms. Ana also did not tell them how to optimize the use of the Zoom. For this case, it means that her belief was not the same as the reality. Moreover, she only used Zoom for some meetings. Some others were done through Whatsapp and by giving online assignments distributed via Schoology to substitute some meetings. For Whatsapp, she also did not optimally use all features of that platform. She mostly used Whatsapp to communicate with students before Zoom meetings. Furthermore, she also used that platform to send materials before the meeting started. Meanwhile, for Schoology LMS, she used this only for posting teaching materials for two meetings and questions for the final test. Other features were not used at all.



Furthermore, statements from Mr. Jhon are also consistent with his teaching practice. From the observation, it is apparent that he only used Whatsapp for teaching English listening online. He used that platform to communicate with his students, send syllabus, teaching materials, assignments, and the mid-term test.

3. *Problems that teachers encountered when using online platforms for teaching listening.*

Data from observations and the interview revealed that Ms. Ana found problems in using the online platforms she used when teaching English listening. When using the Zoom application, Ms. Ana sometimes failed to send video materials to students. It was not because of internet connection instability only but also because of a lack of knowledge of how to operate the Zoom application when integrated into her computer. It seems that the teacher still tried to find what to do to fix the problems she encountered by trying and error. The following extracts were taken when the process of teaching and learning was taking place in the first meeting of her instruction.

Ms. Ana.

“Teacher: All right, I... I will share screen. Can you see the video?

Student: yes, mam.

Teacher: can you hear?

Students: no.

Teacher: how come? How to fix this?

Student: I can't hear the voice, sir, mam.

Teacher: Well, how to fix this? If I set this off, it will... say computer sound. Well, can you hear it now?

Students: very clear, mam.”  
(Observation 1, November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Another problem dealt with the duration of the Zoom meeting. She used to use the Zoom meeting application by purchasing Zoom licenses for some periods of time. So, when the license was finished, and she could not buy another license, she just used the free license with limited time of access (forty minutes). When teaching more than that, she had to make another link to keep using Zoom for continuing her online teaching. In fact, she could actually use a free zoom license with more than forty minutes by changing the setting of the Zoom application when making a new meeting by choosing the recurring meeting option. This problem might influence the flow of the teaching and learning process and might distract students' concentration. They have to stop doing the teaching and learning process for a while for re-joining the meeting using another link. On the other hand, Ms. Ana also sometimes found a problem in posting videos via Whatsapp. She said that sometimes she failed posting videos, and she believed that it was because the size of the videos she would share was big. On the contrary, Mr. Jhon said that he found no problems when using Whatsapp. He said that he enjoyed teaching using Whatsapp. He would like to try to use other platforms such as the Zoom application, but he still lacks knowledge about that application.

From the findings, it is found that Ms. Ana has more knowledge about online platforms and has integrated more than one online platform in her online listening instruction than does Mr. Jhon. Their knowledge and beliefs articulated in the interview are in line with their online teaching practices. It is obvious that both used Whatsapp for their online listening instruction. It seems that Whatsapp is more familiar than other online platforms. Whatsapp indeed has been proven helpful in the process of teaching and learning

online. A study by Jafari and Chalak (2016) confirmed that the use of Whatsapp increased junior high school students' vocabulary knowledge. Furthermore, Ta'amneh (2017), who conducted experimental research to investigate the effect of Whatsapp on students' English learning at Taibah University, reported that the use of Whatsapp is effective in increasing students' learning achievement. The experimental group who was treated with both the traditional method and Whatsapp gets a higher score compared to the control group who was only treated with the traditional method (face-to-face interactions). The same result was also obtained by Fattah (2015), who also conducted experimental research in a private university in Saudi Arabia to examine the effectiveness of Whatsapp in developing students' writing skills. His study confirmed that the use of Whatsapp also increased students' interest in learning showed by the increase of their active participation in the teaching and learning process. Besides, a descriptive qualitative study by Rahaded et al. (2020) shows that the use of Whatsapp contributes to building positive students' behavior in which students feel more prepared in learning, more confident, and focused when participating in the class. In addition, Hamad's study (2017) and Saiful's (2018) revealed similar findings that Whatsapp is beneficial in enhancing students' motivation in learning and helping students to be more autonomous. Finally, Alqahtani (2018) and Wijaya (2018) reported that students believed that Whatsapp was useful for their learning process.

However, the benefits of the use of Whatsapp in these findings were not obtained merely by using that application. Most of the studies used Whatsapp, which was still integrated with face-to-face interactions (Alqahtani et al., 2018; Fattah, 2015; Hamad, 2017; Jafari & Chalak, 2016; Saiful, 2018; Ta'amneh, 2017; Wijaya, 2018). Furthermore, the elements and skills of language being investigated did not

include listening skills. Furthermore, previous research confirmed that relying on one medium when teaching online is considered less desirable (Hrastinski, 2007). Therefore, we assume that for teaching listening fully online, it is better for teachers to combine the use of Whatsapp with other applications such as Zoom or other online web-conference applications, as has been done by Ms. Ana.

Web-conference applications give teachers and students the opportunity for video conferencing in real-time so that they can interact lively by being able to see each other and helpful for building student engagement in the teaching and learning process. Interactions via Web-conference are more personable in terms of allowing teachers and students to engage in more social conversation than that via Whatsapp only. Interactions via text messaging only also potentially create more misunderstandings since the interlocutors lack oral and visual cues that help them to interpret messages they have received. In addition, lack of direct online, face-to-face engagement because they do not see each other might decrease students' motivation and self-belonging to the class. Moreover, for listening skills, some studies reported that students perceived that listening is the most difficult skill to learn (Bingol et al., 2014; Field, 2008; Renandya & Farrell, 2011; Siegel, 2013). Therefore, teachers should be able to design interesting instructions so that students are motivated to study. Web-conference applications like Zoom also provides many tools/features to make the interactions more interesting such as sharing a whiteboard, applications, many kinds of files (texts, audio, video, etc.), instant text messaging, emojis, etc. (Bickerstaff, 2020; Reushle & Loch, 2008). Moreover, Zoom also can help teachers to record the whole teaching activities automatically when it is set beforehand.

In addition to Web-conferences, teachers also can use an LMS. Ms. Ana has integrated that in her teaching, but unfortunately, she did not optimally use it.

An LMS can actually be used not only for posting materials and assignments but also for updating the information regularly, celebrating students' success and classroom events, and for providing space for students to post questions anytime they need. Integrating Whatsapp to LMS in teaching online will be more secure than using Whatsapp only since data in Whatsapp will be easily erased when the users are not careful when using it. Materials sent through Whatsapp also will burden both teachers' and students' devices. Moreover, for big data, for example, a bit-long video, Whatsapp sometimes fails to send it. Meanwhile, data in LMS will be saved safely and not burden since it is saved online.

Aside from the three online applications mentioned previously, there are many other online platforms teachers can use for teaching online. Bickerstaff (2020) noted that there are at least six best online platforms for teaching teachers can use. They are Edmodo, Moodle, BrightSpace, WizIQ, Udemy, and BigblueBotton. Meanwhile, for online sharing materials, teachers can use Google Drive, OpenDrive, Dropbox, Evernote, and Just Beam It. Finally, teachers also can maximize online resources for teaching listening in addition to offline videos they have used. They can access learning materials for students from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learninenglish>, <http://www.esl-lab.com>, <http://www.elllo.org>, <http://www.EnglishListening.com>, <http://www.dailystep.com>, <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-central-skills-listening.htm>, [http://www.dy-tech.info/hotpot/quiz\\_page.html](http://www.dy-tech.info/hotpot/quiz_page.html), <http://www.dictationonline.com>, <http://www.listen-and-write.com>, <http://www.howjsay.com>, <http://www.eslpod.com>, <http://www.archiecomics.com/podcasts> (Gomez Martinez, 2010) and from many other websites for interactive ESL

listening, which fit students' mood (<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/esl-listening-websites/>).

## Conclusions

This paper has elaborated on teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding online platforms for teaching English listening at the tertiary level. Data from the interview and observations revealed that both teachers' knowledge and beliefs are in line with their teaching practices. However, the use of online platforms in their instruction is considered less optimal. This is influenced by their lack of knowledge on online platforms they should use when teaching listening online. Both teachers believe that there are other online platforms they can use besides those they already used, but they are not familiar with them. Furthermore, even though Ms. Ana shows that she is more knowledgeable than is Mr. Jhon, proven by the use of multiple online platforms in her listening instruction, she just uses each platform partially. Not all features that can create an interactive and interesting learning process are applied.

The overall finding of this study implies that university teachers need trainings on how to learn to become online teachers, how to teach online, and more knowledge on platforms they can use and how to operate them to make their online teaching run smoothly and interesting, which results in the betterment/improvement of students' listening skill. As Comas-Quinn (2011) asserted that "both the teachers and the institution need to make a great investment in terms of time, effort and commitment to provide adequate training for teachers and to ensure a high level of competence, pedagogical understanding, and teaching effectiveness" (p. 221) even more for teaching online since "delivering online language courses is extremely labour intensive" and they require "more time on teacher support and development than on any other area" (Ernest & Hopkins, 2006, p. 555). Finally, Lamy and Hampel (2007) asserted that

teacher training is crucial "to enable teachers to become competent users of the functions of the technology, fully aware of its affordances" (p.63).

This study has been conducted using a case study design. Hence, we cannot generalize the finding for a larger scope. Future studies dealing with teachers' cognition (knowledge and beliefs) about teaching online might be conducted using a mixed-method by including a survey research design to gain a wider portray of the aforementioned phenomenon. The topic of the research also can be widened by including other aspects of teacher cognition such as identity, attitude, and perception of university teachers regarding teaching online.

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