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Examining Teachers' Perceptions of E-Learning Tools: A Survey from Indonesian EAP Classrooms

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Abstract:
Given the fact that online teaching has been widely implemented across the globe during this Covid-19 pandemic, teachers are required to have a high level of IT skills to be able to conduct online teaching. It is without exception that EAP (English for Academic Purpose) teachers need to familiarize themselves with electronic devices due to the benefits they have to offer in an e-learning environment. The current study aims at examining teachers' perceptions of using e-learning tools in the context of Indonesian EAP classrooms. Forty-five Indonesian EAP teachers participated in the current study with different ages, academic backgrounds, and lengths of EAP teaching experiences. The instruments used to collect the research data were an online survey and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that video and VLEs were the two most commonly-used e-learning tools among the teachers with "self-taught" and "colleagues" being the two most favorite approaches the teachers have employed to learn such tools. Besides, promoting student engagement and developing learner autonomy were perceived as positive impacts of using e-learning tools by the teachers. Pedagogical implications of this study's findings suggested that school authorities should organize more regular pre-service teacher training programs with the purpose to help novice teachers to improve their IT skills. Besides, e-learning tools should be more used in online teachings due to the benefits they have to offer for promoting student

engagement and facilitating learner autonomy. A number of limitations in the current study are also presented along with some suggestions for future studies.

***Keywords**: EAP teachers, e-learning tools, teachers' perceptions*

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the Covid-19 pandemic spread at the beginning of 2020, almost all educational sectors across the globe have shifted to virtual teaching. In other words, the e-learning approach has been implemented by many educational institutions. Clark and Mayer (2016) defined e-learning as a method of instruction by using a digital tool (e.g. computer, tablet, smartphone) with the purpose to support the teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, Jung (2015) highlighted the use of electronic devices in the teaching and learning process as it refers to three well-known terms, including TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning), CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning), and MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning).

The increasing use of electronic devices in education indicates that students have already possessed a required level of digital ability, such as the ability to complete tasks electronically, submit online assignments, communicate via digital platforms, engage in online discussions, or conduct internet research. To ensure the effectiveness of the e-learning process, teachers are similarly required to become familiar with the use of various digital tools in their teaching practices. It is therefore both students and teachers in any language teaching context, including English for Academic Purposes (EAP), need to develop their digital literacy to be able to reach the effectiveness of online teachings (Hockly, 2012; Røkenes & Krumsvik, 2016; Windsor & Park, 2014). Furthermore, digital literacy is not only crucial to conduct effective online teachings, but also important to "effectively interpret, manage, share, and create meaning in the growing range of digital communication channels" (Dudeney et al., 2014, p. 2) Those who have limited digital literacy, as suggested by Prensky (2001), are called "digital immigrants" which refers to a group of people who have not grown up with technology resulting in them having low-level of competence in using electronic devices that is very common among younger generation called "digital natives". Although young people in this digital era are expected to become more experts with electronic devices, as Pegrum (2009) highlights, some youngsters are found to have no familiarity with technology tools. Similarly, Walker and White (2013) argued that age or generation should not be used as the only indicator of IT competence, but interest and need should be. In the context of language teaching, furthermore, EAP teachers are expected to play an important role as technological mentors who can help enhance students' digital

literacy which leads to students' academic development (Arnó-Macià & Rueda-Ramos, 2011; Windsor & Park, 2014). With regards to teachers' digital literacy, Marcelo and Yot-Domínguez, (2019) reported that two key determinants in teacher technology acquisition are teachers' self-confidence and appropriate teacher training. Aside from self-confidence, as Kessler and Plakans (2008) point out, teachers' length of experience in using digital tools is another important element as it can familiarize teachers with a variety of technology devices. Likewise, Liu and Kleinsasser (2015) found that the participants of CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) training in their study lacked confidence in their IT skills. Although the participants found the CALL training useful, they highlighted insufficient time they had to apply what they had learned in their classroom teaching practices. Gilbert (2013) similarly revealed that the EAP teachers in her study found difficulty in integrating technology into their teaching practice due to the short duration of classroom time. Such short classroom time was designed to cover the curriculum, and the EAP teachers are required to comply with that regulation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 E-Learning in EAP Contexts

In relation to e-learning in EAP contexts, as discussed by Chau and Lee (2014), there have been many scholars that primarily focus on examining the use of computerized corpora with the purpose to develop academic writing skills. For example, Gilbert (2013) reviewed a number of literature related to a concordance and corpus analysis in EAP. She highlighted the minimum application of concordance in teaching practices although it was found considerably beneficial for material development, vocabulary acquisition, and word-list production. Meanwhile, Timmis (2015) revealed that corpus analysis is beneficial in EAP material development and syllabus design more than in teaching practices, an issue that has been discussed by Tribble and Jones (1990). In their book, guidance was provided on how to use a concordance for study purposes. In this respect, Walker and White (2013) mentioned the necessity of guidance for EAP students on how to effectively use electronic tools although they may be familiar with technological things. Furthermore, Charles and Pecorari (2015) argued that the use of digital tools in language classrooms potentially promoted learner autonomy. This was due to the fact that EAP students had multiple opportunities to independently work on their tasks, upload their assignments, respond to teachers' questions, and collaborate with their peers. Likewise, Windsor and Park (2014) found that the use of structured wiki tasks enabled EAP students to conduct collaborative work and to develop their reading skills, with the emphasis on explicit guidance should be provided as some students may not be familiar with the wiki tools. Barrett and Liu (2016) on the other hand, examined how EAP students used e-learning tools to conduct oral presentations, and reviewed a number of relevant studies conducted from 2000 to 2014. Their finding revealed that digital tools had significantly developed, yet not

many digital tools had been researched in relation to help EAP students with their oral presentation. They concluded with the notion that EAP teachers were required to learn how to use digital tools and integrate them into their teaching practices, and teach their students how to use digital tools for their oral presentation tasks.

2.2 Research Questions

From the review of the research literature above, it can be assumed that most of the studies primarily have focused on the application of an e-learning tool by individual EAP practitioners in their own teaching, and the investigation of students' perceptions of it. Furthermore, the studies mostly revealed the development of EAP practitioners' digital literacy through reflection practices, training programs, and guided instruction (Dudeney et al., 2014). There have been, however, relatively few studies examining teachers' perceptions on e-learning tools in the context of the Indonesian EAP classrooms. It is therefore the current study is trying to fill in this gap by addressing the following research questions:

1. What types of e-learning tools are used by EAP teachers?
2. How do EAP teachers think about e-learning tools?
3. How do EAP teachers develop their IT competence?

It is hoped that the findings of this study provide those, particularly EAP practitioners, with some valuable insight regarding e-learning tools that can support the teaching and learning process.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

This study was conducted in Indonesia. To select EAP teachers to participate in this study, a snowballing and convenience sampling strategy was employed. It yielded 45 EAP teachers specialized in Applied Linguistics (*n=9*), TESOL-Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (*n=22*), and English Language Education (*n=14*). The participants were 25 females and 20 males with lengths of EAP teaching experiences ranging from 1 to 5 years (50%), 6 to 10 (25%) years, and 11 to 15 years (25%). Out of these 45 participants, 5 of them were invited to semi-structured interviews as can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The information of the interview participants

Teachers (pseudonym)	Gender	Major	Length of EAP teaching Experiences (in years)
Kevin	F	TESOL	7
Sarah	M	English Language Education	12
David	M	Applied Linguistics	11
Susan	F	TESOL	4
Julia	F	TESOL	7

3.2 Instruments

A convergent parallel mixed method (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) was employed to collect the data comprising an online survey and semi-structured interviews (see appendices). As for the survey, it was designed using the Qualtrics survey platform and administered to obtain a broad overview of the issue containing different types of questions including 9 dichotomous questions which required the participants to select between 'yes' and 'no' answers. Based on their 'yes' and 'no' answers, the participants were required to answer multiple-choice questions which each consisted of 5 options (self-taught, colleagues, pre-service training center, in-service training center, and previous qualifications). Last, the participants answered 4 open-ended questions related to their EAP teaching experiences using e-learning tools.

The second instrument, semi-structured interviews, were carried out to gain more in-depth information which was intended to triangulate the results. Before that, an interview protocol had been developed and it contained 11 major questions. The interviews began with an open-ended question (i.e. How long have you been teaching EAP programs?) and continued with specific questions written in the protocol. If needed, additional or relevant questions were raised to elicit elaborate answers. It should be noted that the interviews were carried out in the participants' first language, Bahasa Indonesia, to allow them to express their opinions with greater ease without any struggles with second language barriers that might occur during the interviews. Each interview lasted for about 45-60 minutes and was audio recorded to be analyzed later.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

From the online survey, two quantitative data (dichotomous and multiple-choice questions) were statistically analyzed, and the other (open-ended questions) were manually coded and qualitatively analyzed. Similarly, the interview transcriptions were coded and qualitatively analyzed. It should be noted that during the qualitative analysis, the researchers paid more attention to the obvious convergence and divergence of the respondents' statements. Both the quantitative and qualitative data, as suggested by Creswell & Creswell, (2018), were then triangulated by repeatedly reading both of the data sources with the purpose to identify the points of convergence.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. The types of e-learning tools are used by EAP teachers

Based on the results of the online survey presented in figure 1, it was found that the participants used 9 different types of e-learning tools in their EAP teachings during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear that over 80% of the two types of e-learning tools (video and VLE) were used by the EAP teachers. Meanwhile, five other tools (plagiarism software, writing feedback applications, digital whiteboards, quizzes,

and collaboration tools) were used between 55% and 75%, followed by two less common e-learning tools (referencing software and note-taking applications) which accounted for 39% and 34% respectively.

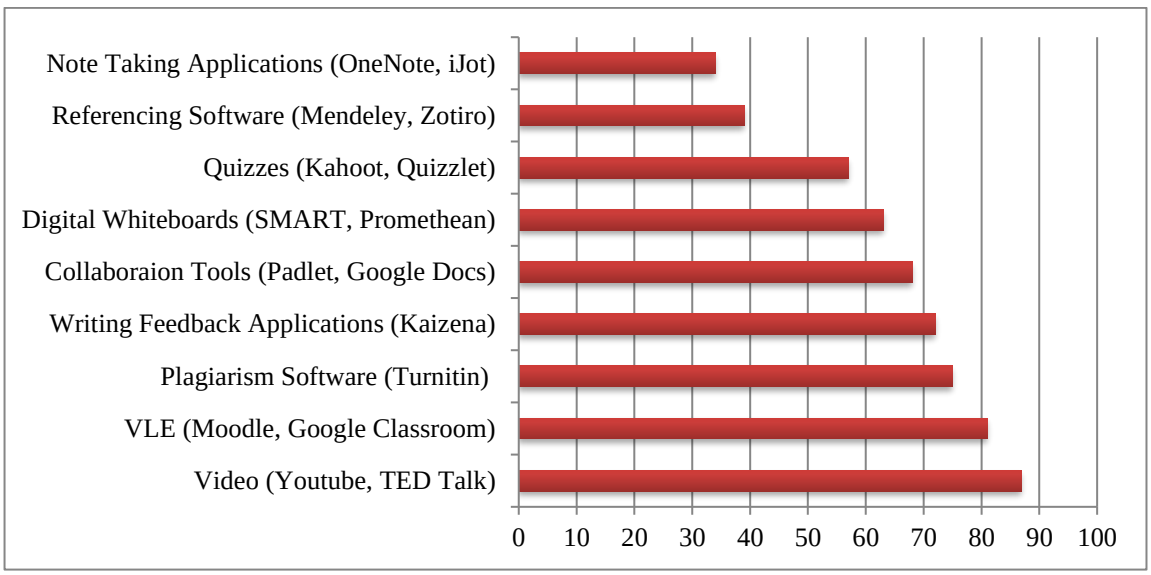

Figure 1. Types of e-learning tools by EAP teachers

4.2. EAP teachers think about e-learning tools

As displayed in figure 1 above, it is clear that video was the most commonly used e-learning tool (87%) among the EAP teachers. During the interview session, Kevin and Susan mentioned the advantages of video in engaging their students in the lesson topics

> Kevin: *"I usually play short-duration videos at the beginning of my online classes. It is quite effective to engage my students in the lesson topics. I usually download the videos from YouTube and made sure that the videos are not only interesting but also relevant."*
>
> Susan: *"TED Talk is my favorite source of the video. I usually use TED Talk videos when I teach speaking skills, so my students can hear how English native speakers speak. I think it is a very enjoyable method since the students can learn the language and watch the video at the same time"*

The interview excerpts above indicated that video was perceived as an effective e-learning tool to promote student engagement. This was also featured in the open-ended question part of the online survey:

> *"I love using videos due to the fact that it is very useful to engage my student in the online classes. Believe me, the students seem very boring without any videos. It is for this reason I always use videos as an opening session of my EAP classes."*

Following the videos, VLEs (Google Classroom and Moodle) were the second most common tool (81%) among the participants. When asked in the interview sessions, Sarah and David explained how VLEs were able to develop learner autonomy:

> Sarah: *"I have been using Google Classroom since the beginning of 2020. Although I think Google Classroom is not very beneficial, it is very accessible. Students can use their laptops, tablet, or smartphone. Besides, it encourages students to work independently by providing them with greater access to manage their own tasks"*

> David: *"I love using Moodle when I have to teach writing skills. It allows me to ask my students to do collaborative peer-review activities. The students need to put up their writing tasks every week and comment on each other. Other than developing learner autonomy, I think that Moodle can help improve students' writing skills through collaborative work."*

As mentioned by David's statements above, Moodle was found quite effective to promote student collaborative skills. Other types of collaboration tools (Padlet and Google Docs) were scored of 68% by the participants. Sarah, for example, explained how her institution required all the teachers to use Padlet.

> Sarah: *"At first, I was not familiar with Padlet. But when my manager asked me to use it, I started to learn how to use it through the internet. I found it quite effective to develop my students' writing skills through collaborative tasks. They can manage their own work and comment to each other."*

Aside from promoting student engagement, the three previous quotes indicated that e-learning tools (i.e. VLEs and Collaboration Tools) were found to become effective in developing learner autonomy. This was also featured in the open-ended question part of the online survey:

> "*The digital tools that I have been using (i.e. Google Classroom, Moodle, Padlet) are very helpful to not only improve students' learning motivation but also develop learner autonomy. By this means, students are able to manage their own work independently. It provides students with greater freedom and access to continue their own learning at anywhere and at any time.*

Other e-learning tools highly ranked in the online survey were plagiarism software and writing feedback applications. Both of these tools received more than a 70%

positive response from the participants. Following this, digital whiteboards and quizzes were rated 63% and 57% respectively in the online survey. When asked in the interview sessions, Julia and Kevin mentioned:

> Julia: "*There is a multifunction room in my institution which provides us with a digital whiteboard. It can be used to present topic materials, project things onto the board, or surf the internet. I think that a digital whiteboard is useful because it helps promote student engagement. But that multifunction room is not easy to access since too many teachers need to use it"*
>
> Kevin: "*To check my students' learning progress, I usually do quizzes by using Kahoot. I think Kahoot is quite simple, interesting, and easy to use. There are many types of games in Kahoot which can be used to keep students motivated in their learning."*

Last, the two lowest-ranking tools (under 30%) in the survey were referencing software and note-taking applications. As presented in figure 1, both of these tools received a score of 39% and 34% respectively.

4.3. Developing EAP teachers' competence in using e-learning tools

Based on the results of the online survey displayed in figure 2 below, it was found that the participants employed a variety of methods in developing their IT skills. Among 5 different options, it is clear that the majority of the participants preferred "self-taught" and "colleagues" with a score of 85% and 82% respectively. During the interview sessions, Kevin and Sarah mentioned:

> Kevin: "*My institution held a seminar regarding Moodle a few months ago. It was a good seminar because the speakers showed us how to use Moodle in teachings. Before attending the seminar, I actually had watched some online videos about Moodle and learned myself."*
>
> Sarah: "*Honestly speaking, I have never attended training programs like other teachers. But I often asked some of my colleagues how to use Padlet, for example. I found it quite effective because I can go back and ask them whenever I need help."*

Both of these methods (self-taught and colleagues) were also featured in the open-ended question part of the online survey:

> *"The best method to learn how to use digital tools is self-learning. Of course, training programs are helpful. Based on my experience, however, I feel more evolved by self-learning. Similarly, discussing with my colleagues is very beneficial. We often talk a lot about various e-learning tools and help each other."*

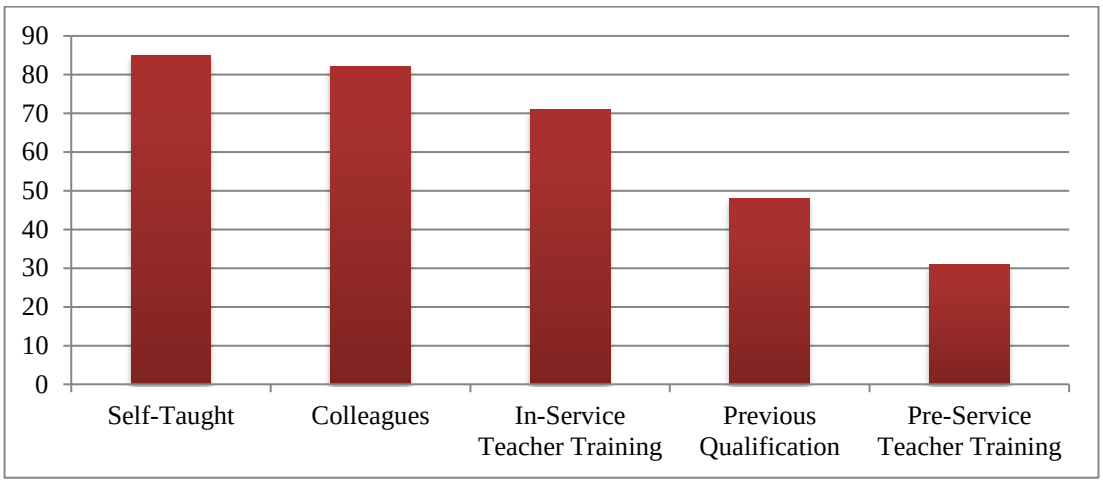

Figure 2. Approaches to Develop IT Skills by EAP teachers

Another approach, "in-service teacher training", was quite popular and highly scored (71%) by the participants. When asked in the interview sessions, David responded:

> David: "*There were some in-service teacher training programs held by my institution last year. Such programs were intended to help teachers improve their IT skills. But I think the teachers need more training programs, especially during this pandemic era which requires all teachers to possess a high level of IT skills to conduct online teaching practices."*

The need for training programs also occurred in the open-ended question part of the online survey. Although the teachers acknowledged the quality of such training programs, however, they regrated the number of training programs they have received.

> *"The teacher-training programs in my institution are very useful and helpful. In my opinion, however, such programs need to be regularly conducted every semester to develop teachers' IT competence. Many of us are still not familiar with certain digital tools."*

The least two favorite approaches (under 50%) in the online survey are "previous qualification" and "pre-service teacher training" which accounted for 48% and 32% respectively. Both of these two approaches were mentioned by the interview participants:

> Susan: *"I completed my master's degree 3 years ago, I remember that I had a compulsory course, namely "Technology in Language Teaching" which provided me with relevant IT skills. But I sometimes can't completely remember the contents of what I had learned. What a shame!"*

> Julia: *"To tell you the truth, I had received only one teacher training program before I started my teaching career. This is because my institution had no such regular programs for new teachers. I need to use my own money to attend external teacher professional development programs."*

Clearly, both of these methods (previous qualification and pre-service teacher training) were perceived helpful by the participants, yet not very beneficial. This issue was also found in the open-ended question part of the online survey:

> "*Although I learned about technology in language teaching during my master's degree, it was mostly about theoretical issues. I need more training that can provide me with multiple opportunities to apply what I have learned to classroom teaching practices. That's why teacher training programs should be more provided for novice teachers, particularly."*

5. DISCUSSION

Based on the finding of the online survey, none of the e-learning tools was ranked 100% by the EAP teachers. It can be assumed that, as suggested by Bax (2013), not many teachers are familiar with the use of technology in EAP classrooms. Despite this, the majority of the EAP teachers (87%) in the current study used videos such as YouTube and TED Talks in their teaching practices. Inconsistent with the idea of breaking free of "the temporal linearity of traditional classroom instruction" (Walker & White, 2013, p. 85), the EAP teachers in the current study utilized modern technology, particularly online videos, as a warming-up activity to engage their students in lesson topics. Following the video, VLE (i.e. Google Classroom, Moodle) is the second-highest e-learning tool (81%) ranked in the online survey and greatly featured in the qualitative data. This is in accordance with previous studies (Dashtestani & Stojković, 2015; Ilin, 2013) which reported high respect for VLE among EAP teachers. Although Google Classroom was perceived as a less useful tool, the participants commented positively as it potentially developed learner autonomy. In relation to this, Charles and Pecorari (2015) argued that when students are provided with greater access to their learning, they become more reflective and independent learners. Another VLE tool, Moodle, was highly valued by the participants as it allowed them to promote students' collaboration skills. The positive effects of students' collaborative work on their own learning were repeatedly mentioned by the participants during the interview sessions. It is also indicated in the online survey that 68% of the participants favored collaboration tools such as Padlet and Google Docs. As suggested by Charles and Pecorari (2015), collaboration tools provide students with valuable opportunities "to create, share, and respond to content" (p. 85).

Two other e-learning tools, plagiarism software and writing feedback applications, are also ranked highly in the online survey with a score of 75% and 72% respectively. Nevertheless, both of these tools were not mentioned by the participants during the interview sessions. This may be because they focused on the teaching tools more than the assessment tools. Meanwhile, digital whiteboards (i.e. SMART, Promethean) rated 63% in the online survey. During the interview sessions, the participants highlighted the convenience of digital whiteboards. These tools were mentioned to help promote student engagement and interaction as they could be used to present topic materials, project things onto the board, or to surf the internet. In alignment with Dudeney and Hockly (2012), digital whiteboards are evidenced to provide students and teachers with pedagogical value more than just modern technology. The next e-learning tool, Quizzes (i.e. Kahoot and Quizzlet), was ranked 57% in the online survey and discussed in the interview sessions. Kahoot and Quizzlet were perceived as relatively useful tools by the participants as they could be used to consolidate students' learning. This echoes the finding of Dhillon & Murray (2021) who reported that almost half of EAP teachers in their study used quizzes as quick activities to consolidate students learning. The two lowest-ranking tools in the survey are referencing software and note-taking applications with a score of 39% and 34% respectively. However, these two tools did not occur in the qualitative data. This may be because the participants placed a greater emphasis on the academic skills with the purpose to help their students successfully complete the EAP course, resulting in the study skills being greatly overlooked.

In terms of the approaches that the EAP teachers employed to develop their IT skills, a similar pattern was found. None of the approaches was ranked 100% in the survey by the EAP teachers. However, most of them (85%) appeared to favor "self-taught" for every tool listed (9/9) in the survey, which also can be found in the qualitative data. This finding aligns with Dhillon and Murray's (2021) study which reported that the majority of the EAP teachers learned e-learning tools themselves. In their study, it was found that the teachers' previous qualifications had equipped them to self-improve their IT skills. Likewise, almost half of the participants (48%) in the current study acknowledged the positive effects of their previous qualifications on their EAP teaching career, although not very impactful. The second most favorite approach among the participants, as both quantitative (82%) and qualitative data reported, was "colleagues" for 7 of the 9 tools listed in the survey. This result supports what Kessler (2007) and Haines (2015) have found that informal discussions with colleagues were perceived as one of the effective ways to develop IT skills among EAP teachers. Following this, "in-service teacher training" was the third most popular method (71%) among the participants. Although they had attended training programs before, as suggested in the literature (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012; Godwin, 2015) language teachers need to be constantly trained with the use of technology. Last, "pre-service teacher training" appeared to become the

lowest-ranking approach (34%) in the online survey. In contrast, Dhillon and Murray (2021) reported that 29% of the participants in their study agreed to not receive pre-service teacher training courses. It can be assumed that the rest of the participants (71%) received pre-service teacher training. This may be because the majority of the participants in their study had multiple pre-service training programs for novice teachers in their own institution, while this case is not found in the current study. As the qualitative revealed, few of the participants in the current study received regular pre-service teacher training from their own workplace.

6. CONCLUSION

The current study set out to examine teachers' perceptions of e-learning tools in the context of Indonesian EAP classrooms. The majority of the studies that we reviewed primarily have focused on the application of a particular e-learning tool by individual EAP practitioners in their own teaching, and the investigation of students' perceptions of it (Chau & Lee, 2014; Gilbert, 2013). In addition, the studies mostly revealed the development of EAP practitioners' digital literacy through reflection practices, training programs, and guided instruction (Dudeney et al., 2014; Timmis, 2015). Furthermore, our review found that there is an increasing research interest in the role, identity, and professional remit of EAP practitioners (Campion, 2016; Charles & Pecorari, 2015). There have been, however, relatively few studies examining teachers' perceptions of e-learning tools in the context of the Indonesian EAP classroom. It is therefore the current study is trying to fill in this gap by exploring the perspectives of Indonesian EAP teachers regarding e-learning tools.

Some pedagogical implications can be seen from the study's findings. First, school authorities should organize more regular pre-service teacher training programs with the purpose to help novice teachers to improve their IT skills. Second, e-learning tools should be more used in online teachings due to the benefits they have to offer for promoting student engagement and facilitating learner autonomy. Third, the use of e-learning tools is likely to be perceived as effective if some contextual factors (i.e. students' interests, learning styles, culture, age, and gender) are highly considered. Last, school officials should be mindful of the challenges that teachers face in using e-learning tools and should facilitate teachers with more training programs to eradicate the challenges.

Despite the implications mentioned above, it should be noted that the current study is not without limitations. Aside from a small sample of participants, this study examined the use of e-learning tools from the EAP teachers' perspectives. To reach a more comprehensive framework, future research can examine the use of e-learning tools from the EAP students' perspectives. Furthermore, this study provided some meaningful insight into the perceptions of EAP teachers on e-learning tools. Future research can compare the perceptions on e-learning tools between EAP teachers and EFL teachers as both types of these teachers may have different teaching contexts. While this study mainly focused on reporting the benefits of e-learning tools from

the teachers' perspectives, future studies can focus on exploring the challenges of using e-learning tools from the perspectives of both teachers and students. Last but not least, interested future researchers can investigate approaches that both teachers and students employ to improve their IT skills.

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