

ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON USING DIGITAL TOOLS IN THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

In the digital era, the application of technology for classroom learning is urgently needed. Teachers are greatly helped by the availability of various digital tools because it can be used to support the students' learning process. Teacher's behavior and trust are important factors in determining the role and effectiveness of technology use in the classroom. However, with all the advantages and conveniences offered by digital tools, there are still challenges that must be faced by the teachers. This study aims to find out the perception of English teachers towards the use of digital tools in teaching English. The participants were English Education students at Universitas Terbuka who enrolled the Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) courses. The method used in this research is qualitative and the data is collected by using questionnaire. This research is expected to provide recommendations on the development of teaching methods and teaching materials related to the digital tools.

Keywords: *Teachers' Perception, Digital Tools, English classroom*

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology in the digital age makes it easier for teachers to deliver learning more effectively. The existence of various digital tools is important to support the students' learning process. Ovcharuk, et al (2020) stated that the use of digital tools by teachers in European countries are aimed at building the digital environment, developing the digital competence of the teacher and student, and introducing innovations in the learning process.

In Indonesia, teachers' digital literacy are still poor. The data from JAPELIDI (Digital Literacy Advocates Network) that focus on the digital literacy movement mapping research in Indonesia pointed out that school institutions placed a lower rank in organizing digital literacy (Kurnia, 2021). Furthermore, final report year 2021 by UNICEF Indonesia showed the data from The Economist's 'Inclusive Internet Index 2020' 7 commissioned by Facebook, which surveyed 100 countries. It was revealed that Indonesia's poor performance across all metrics highlights the extent of Indonesia's unequal internet usage, underdeveloped internet infrastructure, and limited digital literacy, including the

use of digital tools. Therefore, this study is needed to know the perception of teachers on using the digital tools.

To be able to understand about digital tools, we must comprehend the term itself. According to Mahiri (2011), digital tools are any kind of software or hardware that can be used for education. Digital tools are programs, websites, or online resources that can make tasks easier to complete. Many of these digital tools can be accessed on web browsers without having to be downloaded so that they can be opened at home or at work (DHSC, 2019). With digital tools, students and teachers can collaborate on a project, arrange meetings, interact with many people, and more.

Based on references from the ITILT mini-guide (2017), digital tools are software and platforms for teaching and learning that can be accessed using a computer or mobile device to work with text, images, audio, and video. Tools for language teaching and learning including programs for editing digital materials (audio, video, etc.) and platforms for collaboration and source sharing.

Many tools are designed for other areas of education, or not specifically for educational purposes, although they are perfect for language learning. In learning English, there are four skills that must be mastered by students, namely Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. Teachers to teach these skills use various methods. Dahlkwist (2012) revealed that different teaching strategies can increase students' interest and motivation in learning.

However, with all the advantages and conveniences offered by digital tools, there are still challenges that must be faced by the teachers. Johnson, et.al (2016) revealed that the initial obstacles to successful integration of technology in the classroom came from external factors to the implementation of technology by teachers.

Study conducted by Ghavifekr et. al (2015) also shows that there are great challenges for teachers in using ICT in teaching and learning in the classroom. In addition, research by Cheng (2018) involving teachers in Sweden revealed that there are various disadvantages of using digital tools in the classroom. The teachers explained that student's most likely misuse the technology, including playing games or access social media. This is quite disruptive to the learning process in the classroom.

Universitas Terbuka as the leading university in distance education in Indonesia pays great attention to the use of technology in the teaching and learning process. Students majoring in English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Terbuka, who are currently teachers, are expected to be able to use technology in teaching and learning activities, so that the acquisition of students' knowledge and skills is more effective.

One of the courses related to English teaching methods is Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). This course contains topics related to teaching English as a foreign language including communicative competence, teaching vocabulary, teaching grammar, teaching listening, teaching reading, teaching speaking, teaching writing, teaching English through literature, and teaching integrated skills.

There are many researches that has been conducted related to the use of digital tools by teachers. However, there is a limited source on the perception of English teachers on using digital tools in the classroom. Based on this, researchers aim to investigate the perception of English teachers towards the use of digital tools to teach English skills to students. In this study, digital tools in question include class-based technology, laptop/tablet/mobile phone, internet, computer software, applications, online video/audio/text sources and digital books. Researchers expected that this research could provide knowledge about the perception of English teachers towards the use of digital tools to improve the effectiveness of learning in the classroom. In addition, the results of this study are also expected to provide recommendations on the development of teaching methods and teaching materials.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research used qualitative research method. According to Denscombe (2011), the main feature of qualitative research is the interest in knowing the meaning and way people understand something. The research respondents were students of the English Education study program who enrolled in the TEFL II courses during the 2020.1 registration period.

Eight participants filled out the questionnaire that was distributed through an online tutorial page. This research data collection technique-using questionnaire consisting of 14 questions. The question asked is an open-ended question, which means respondents can give a broad answer. This study uses data analysis technique, namely spiral analysis. The data will be processed through three stages. The first stage is organizing, the second stage is coding, and the last stage is interpreting.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Eight participants from various regional offices (Unit Program Belajar Jarak Jauh/UPBJJ) including Bogor, Bandung, Semarang, Pangkal pinang, Bengkulu, Jambi, and Yogyakarta have given answers to 14 open-ended questions. The participants are teacher who teach in schools at different levels. Six participants were teachers in junior high school and the other participants taught in elementary school.

UT students who are teachers have experience teaching in different times. The diagram below shows the percentage of teaching duration whereas 38% of respondents or three people have taught more than five years. It means that they have more experience in teaching. While participants who teach less than one year, 3-5 years, and other are 1 person or as much as 13% respectively.

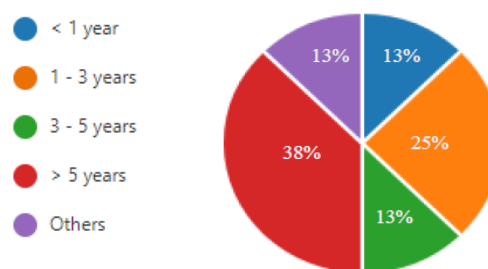


Diagram 1 Teaching Period

Based on data from questionnaires, digital tools that are often used by participants including laptops, computers, projectors, tape recording, smartphones, speakers, tablets, and some applications such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and YouTube. This proves that the teachers are familiar with digital tools shown with a percentage of 50%, while 25% of respondents answered that they felt very

familiar with digital tools. It can also be seen that as many as 12.5% of participants have implemented digital tools about 10 years ago, namely since curriculum 13 was used in schools.

Today, Zoom is one of the most used application for learning. As Firmansyah (2021) states it, online learning using Zoom application was effective. The many features in Zoom make learning more interesting. Digital tools have made teaching and learning in English classes more diverse. Dahlkvist (2012) emphasizes that various forms of teaching can increase students' interest and motivation to learn. Applying tools that students are familiar with can increase their curiosity and draw their attention to the lesson.

Respondents who are English teachers replied that they were helped by the existence of digital tools for learning in the classroom. The use of digital tools is very important, as it can help to know more about the lessons. In addition, digital tools make it easier for teachers to work and get information on what to teach to the students. They also stated that digital tools make them more confident when teaching in the classroom and students are also more motivated in learning. This is in accordance with the participant's response (P) as seen in the quote below:

P: "Using the digital tools in the English classroom can help me as an English teacher to be more confident in teaching. While for students is to motivate them in learning, so there is no boredom."

According to the teachers, there are several advantages if we use digital tools in English classes. One of the benefits is it makes teaching easier, particularly when delivering materials. In addition, students can learn about life skills using technology. By using digital tools, students will have more interest on the material, and they will not feel bored. Here is an excerpt from the participants:

P1: "Students are not bored and it makes the lesson more interesting"

P2: "Interesting for students because they aren't boring in learning process"

However, there are some obstacles faced by teachers in implementing the use of digital tools in the classroom. Some of the challenges are the lack of internet access and the absence of adequate facilities. The shortage of electricity in

some areas in Indonesia is also an obstacle that must be faced by teachers. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

P: “the challenges that I see in implementing the use of digital tools in my classroom is lack of internet network and adequate facilities”

One of the participants admitted that she felt surprised by the rapid development of technology in using digital tools. However, the challenges can create many new opportunities for students as the respondents presented in the excerpt below:

P: “Everything has changed since I taught at JHS. I am struck by extent to which recent digital tools innovations have created many new opportunities to better serve traditionally disadvantaged students.”

The use of digital tools in English classrooms provides convenience for teachers because they feel that when these digital tools are integrated into the learning process, students will be more interested. Here is the respondent's statement on this matter:

P: “Of course, I feel comfortable when using personal laptop in doing the learning and teaching”

P: “When using the laptop and other digital equipment is integrated into learning process, students to be more interested in the subject that they are studying. That's why, as a teacher, I feel comfortable”

Based on the results of the study, it is known that teachers feel many benefits when using digital tools. In addition to teachers, digital tools are very useful for students. Teachers explained that students could access English learning pages and translate words or sentences in English as seen in the excerpt below:

P: “I use digital tools often open sites that learn English, that's where I know a lot about English.”

P: “very influential in translating sentences that are considered very difficult to understand”

P: “the student easier to understand moreover when study about pronunciation”

Teachers are strongly supported by schools to use digital tools in the English classroom. Although the school does not provide training or workshop on digital tools to teachers, they are still enthusiastic in using various applications to support learning process.

Teachers' behavior and trust are important factors in determining the role and effectiveness of the use of technology in the classroom. With the abundant availability of technology for education, teachers are required to have high confidence that they can use technology effectively. Most teachers today do not grow up with technology, so they do not have access to computers and the internet. Meanwhile, today's children are already exposed to technology even before they are born, which we refer to as "digital natives". They can lower the confidence of teachers who do not have technological knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to determine the teacher's perception of the use of digital tools in English classes. There are various kinds of digital tools used by teachers when teaching in the classroom. In addition, many challenges are faced in the use of digital tools in English learning, including the lack of internet and the absence of facilities.

Based on the results of the study, researchers provide some advice for teachers and institutions. First, researchers advised teachers to explore a variety of applications that can be used to support the English learning process. Another suggestion is for teachers to participate in trainings and workshops on digital tools, whether organized by schools where teachers teach or other institutions.

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