Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Technology Use in English Language Learning During The Covid-19 Pandemic and in The Post-Pandemic Period

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Abstract

COVID-19 brings a deep impact on the field of education, especially by pushing the wide use of digital technology in learning. When face-to-face learning returned, it became important to see whether teachers' experiences with technology during the pandemic affected their views and decisions about using technology after the pandemic. Many studies have looked at teachers' views during and after the pandemic, but only a few have explored how English teachers view these experiences and how it influenced their decisions to keep or change their use of technology especially in schools located outside urban centers or in areas with limited resources. This research focused on exploring the views of English teachers on using digital technology during and after the COVID-19 pandemic at a semi-rural public Junior High School in East Kalimantan. This study used a descriptive qualitative method with in-depth interviews for data collection. The results showed that before the pandemic, most teachers only used technology as a supporting tool. After the pandemic ended and learning returned to the classroom, teachers tend to continue the use of technology because they found it helpful and had become accustomed to it, although the use of technology after pandemic less frequent compared to during the pandemic.

Keywords: *Digital Technology, Perception, English Language Learning, COVID-19*

1. Introduction

In the 21st century and revolution industries 4.0, technology is no longer seen as an additional tool, but has become an important element in supporting the teaching and learning process. In the context of language learning, technology has long been recognized as a resource that can enhance the delivery of material to make it more interactive and engaging. As stated by Li (2017), digital technology is a valuable resource that can help language teachers deliver material more effectively. However, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of technology in English language learning was still limited, especially in schools that were not accustomed to using

digital approaches in the teaching and learning process (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021). Furthermore, the government issued Circular Letter No. 4 of 2020, outlining implementation policies during the COVID-19 emergency, which urged educational institutions to suspend direct teaching and learning processes. Following that, Circular Letter No. 12 of 2020 provided guidelines for Learning from Home (LFH) during the Covid-19 emergency. This shift was certainly not easy, especially for English teachers who had always relied heavily on direct interaction and communication practice in teaching and learning process. This in line with research conducted by Sukirman (2023) found that the pandemic brought significant obstacles in the language acquisition process due to reduced opportunities for social interaction and limited immersive experiences.

Furthermore, this phenomenon has become the focus of various studies in recent years. Research by Atmojo and Nugroho (2020) showed that EFL teachers in Indonesia experienced various obstacles during online learning, such as limited access to digital devices, lack of technological proficiency, and difficulties in establishing optimal interaction with students. Other research by Ferri et al. (2020) and Rehman et al. (2021) also showed that low digital competence and unequal access to technology are major challenges in the implementation of online-based learning. According to (Peng et al., 2024) teachers' perceptions of technology also determine their success in adapting to and utilizing technology in teaching.

However, not all teachers' experiences with technology are negative. Research by Nurhidayat et al. (2020) shows that over time, many English teachers have become more motivated and creative in using technology as part of the learning process. The same was found in a study by Nadia et al. (2021), which showed that the majority of teachers began to realize the benefits of technology in facilitating communication with students and making the learning atmosphere more interesting. Furthermore, there is still a gap that has not been explored much, which is how English teachers interpret their experiences in using technology during the pandemic and how this affects their decisions to maintain or change their patterns of technology use in the post-pandemic period, especially in schools located outside urban centers or in areas with limited resources.

2. Literature Review

Along with the times, the existence of digital technology is becoming increasingly relevant and needed, both by teachers and students. Research conducted by Abbasova and Mammadova (2019) shows that there is a very close relationship between language teaching and the use of digital technology, which has now become an integral part of the teaching and learning process. In line with this, Prayogo (2022) states that in facing the challenges of the times and the advancement of technology in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, English language learning in

Indonesia must also develop. This is important to do in order to match the characteristics of generation Z and alpha who are known to be more independent and very familiar with the digital world.

Connected to the use of technology in education, it is important to understand that teachers' application of digital tools is strongly influenced by their perceptions.Furthermore, the word perception comes from the Latin perceptio, from the verb percipere, which means to receive or to take. According to (Qiong, 2017) Perception is the process of attain understanding of sensory information. In general, perception is defined by the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as the way a person thinks about something and their understanding of what it is like, as well as the way a person notices things through the senses, such as sight and hearing. In addition, perception also refers to the natural ability to quickly understand or realize something (Qiong, 2017). Teachers' perceptions of technology do not appear suddenly, but are shaped by various interrelated factors. Understanding these factors is crucial, as both positive and negative perceptions can influence teachers' decisions to integrate technology into their teaching activities. In line with the statement Jatileni and Jatileni (2018) that teachers' perceptions of the use of technology and its integration process are often related to their attitudes, self-efficacy, and level of understanding of the technology itself. This means that the higher the confidence and understanding of teachers in using technology, the more likely it will affect how often and effectively the technology is used in learning.

To help shape positive perceptions, it is essential for teachers to build strong digital competence. European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu), by Redecker (2017), outlines 22 specific digital competencies for educators. These competencies are grouped into six key areas: Professional Engagement, Digital Resources, Teaching and Learning. Assessment, Empowering Learners, Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence. These competencies are further categorized into proficiency levels (A1 to C2), which represent a teacher's growth in using technology effectively. For simplicity in this resrach, these levels can be grouped into four categories: Novice, Competent, Advanced, and Expert. A Novice teacher may still be experimenting with technology and need a lot of guidance, while someone at the Expert level not only uses digital tools skillfully but also innovates and shares best practices with others.

The urgency of developing such competence became even more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic.Furthermore, UNESCO noted that the pandemic caused serious disruptions to education systems across the globe, impacting more than 1.6 billion learners of all ages and education levels. As a response to this crisis, distance learning (PJJ) was recommended as an emergency solution to ensure learning could still continue. The global education crisis that emerged from the pandemic opened up the possibility of a wider adoption of digital during remote learning process (Smirnova et al., 2021). The pandemic is a turning point in the history

of the use of educational technology. Not only has it affected the way teachers teach and students learn during the emergency period, but it has also brought about lasting changes that are felt until the post-pandemic period.

After the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak eased, learning activities gradually returned to normal learning. But the experience during the online learning period has left a significant mark on teachers' mindsets and teaching practices. This observation is supported by the findings of Pozo et al. (2024) indicate that there is a shift in the pattern of technology use, not in the form of a decline, but a more selective and efficient choice of digital tools by teachers. They tend to maintain digital practices that are proven to be effective and appropriate to their respective learning contexts. In addition, the results of a study by Luh Putu Eka Darma Patni et al. (2024) that teachers' perceptions of technology in post-pandemic learning tend to be positive, especially in terms of communication effectiveness, material delivery, and evaluation processes. Technology also helps teachers to adapt materials to students' individual needs, creating more inclusive and learner-centered learning.

3. Methods

This research using a qualitative design with descriptive approach to investigated the perception of English teacher of using digital technology in English language teaching in learning during and post COVID 19. In addition, this research using interview guideline as the research instrument. The questions were assigned to English teacher at a semi-rural public Junior High School in East Kalimantan. Interview was conducted to achieve detail information of English teacher perception regarding the utilization of digital technology in teaching and learning during and post COVID 19.

4. Result

When the pandemic forced the entire learning process to move to remote learning, teachers felt unprepared. 2 participants with low competencies revealed that he was surprised when he had to immediately start teaching online. Meanwhile, 1 participant who was already familiar with technology before the pandemic, showed a more stable initial response and did not experience any significant difficulties during the transition to online learning. From the interview results, after pandemic it is known that teachers began to view technology not as an emergency tool, but as part of a modern learning strategy. They use it to reinforce teaching materials, organize assignments, and make learning more interesting and efficient. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that teachers' view of technology use after the pandemic have evolved to become

more open. The experiences during the pandemic have shaped teachers' mindset that digital skills are an important part of professional competencies in today's era.

This shift in perception is not only coming from participant who are already familiar with technology, but also from those who were previously considered beginners. Even teachers who previously felt insecure are beginning to feel that technological skills are something that can be learned as long as there is willingness and practice. Furthermore, one of the important changes that emerged after the pandemic was the increased readiness and confidence of teachers in using technology in learning. Whereas previously P1 and P2 felt awkward or unsure after going through the experience of teaching online, they showed significant improvement in terms of confidence in their own abilities.

5. Discussion

The finding of this research indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has truly been a turning point in how teachers perceive the utilization of technology in English language learning. The three participants in this study had different experiences, but in the end all teachers admitted that the pandemic situation changed their perspective towards technology. Previously, technology was only used occasionally or even avoided, after the pandemic they began to be more open and felt that technology could indeed help the learning process.

Teachers who initially used technology out of necessity, such as P2 and P3, now use it consciously, more flexibly, and quite regularly. They feel more confident than before the pandemic, and not afraid to try new things, and have begun to view technology as part of their teaching routine, including in face-to-face classes.

Before the pandemic, most teachers in this study were not familiar with actively using technology. Two participants even mentioned that they only used digital devices when absolutely necessary. They were more comfortable with conventional methods. Furthermore, even though learning has returned to face-to-face, the habit of using technology continues among teachers. They tend to feel more comfortable and accustomed to it, no longer viewing technology as merely an alternative tool than before the pandemic. They had to deal with unstable internet connections and a lack of experience with digital platforms. However, the teachers in this study did not remain passive. Instead, they demonstrated many initiatives to adapt. From initially feeling forced and overwhelmed, teachers gradually become accustomed to technology and eventually begin to see it benefit. The experience during the pandemic not only provided lessons in technical matters but also broadened teachers' perspectives on the role of technology in a more modern and relevant education. Even though the frequency becomes less compared to during the pandemic but it's still higher that before pandemic.

6. Conclusion

Before the pandemic, most teachers still used technology in a limited way, both in terms of frequency and the types of tools used. The use of technology was more of a formality or simply to meet administrative requirements. However, when the pandemic forced learning to be conducted online, teachers had no choice but to adapt. In the process, they began to learn, experiment, and eventually became accustomed to using various platforms such as Google Classroom, WhatsApp, YouTube, Google Forms, and interactive PowerPoint presentations.

After the pandemic ended and learning returned to the classroom, these changes did not disappear. Teachers continued to use technology because they found it helpful and had become accustomed to it, although the use of technology after pandemic less frequent than during the pandemic. In addition, some teachers felt more confident and better able to manage their classes because to the digital experience they had gained previously during pandemic. This indicates that technology is tend to seen no longer as a temporary tool but as an important and relevant part of teaching strategies in the present day.

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