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English Teachers' Role in the 21st Century Learning

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Abstract

The English teacher in the 21st-century era is demanded to be the technology expert, project manager, assessor, collaborator, facilitator, and lifelong learner. This study examines the English teachers' beliefs regarding their roles as technology experts. A qualitative approach was employed to gather data from two English teachers from a vocational high school in Padang, West Sumatra. They were selected using a purposive sampling technique with categorization they are familiar with and use technology in their teaching practice. The data of the research are collected through interviews conducted with the use of audio recorders. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory is the foundation for this study's conceptual framework. The findings indicated that English teachers believe they have played their role as technology experts. They have utilized technology in the teaching and learning process. It also found teachers have faith that technology is easy to use and provides much usefulness to support English language teaching. Furthermore, it was found that schools facilitate technology, but the amount of technology support available was still limited.

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is the era of technology, where all aspects must be digitized, especially in education. 21st-century learning involves transforming from teacher-centered to student-centered, characterized by teachers as facilitators of knowledge rather than the sole source of students' understanding. According to Sumardi et al., (2020), the main characteristics of 21st-century learning were student-centered learning, using learning methods that emphasize collaboration and building one's knowledge and using ICT. However, in the field, teacher-centered approaches were still found in the classroom. Supported by Sumardi et al., (2020) they found still more teachers who taught using the teacher-centered approach and used conventional methods; lecturing and taking

notes. This indicated that learning was not aligned with the characteristics of 21st-century learning because there were still many teachers who followed a teacher-centered approach.

Jan (2017) promotes eight characteristics of 21st-century learning. Among them are student-centered and individual, students as producers, project-based learning, learning new technologies, going global, smart in using ICT, collaborative and innovative. In addition, Wrahatnolo & Munoto (2018) stated that education in the 21st century ensures that students can learn and innovate, utilize information technology and media, and work by applying life skills. Therefore, students and teachers need to prepare and respond positively to the challenges of 21st-century education.

Based on Putu et al., (2021) statement, an important role for the 21st-century teacher is to be a role model for students' trust, openness, persistence, and commitment in the face of 21st-century learning. The actualization of professional English teachers could be enhanced by applying for various roles. The teachers' role in the 21st century evolved to include not only transmitting knowledge but also facilitating student-centered learning, promoting critical thinking, and incorporating technology in the classroom. Chineze. et al., (2016) found that the professional roles of 21st-century teachers were technology expert, facilitator, assessor e-assessment, entrepreneur, lifelong learner, project manager, collaborator, and evaluator. However, this present study specifically focused on one role of teachers in the 21st century, technology expert.

Technology is an important issue in supporting the development of teaching and learning processes. It has also become the challenge of 21st-century skills regarding teachers' creativity in classroom practice. Therefore, teachers' role as technology experts is needed to realize that. Teachers as technology experts, use ICT to promote the gaining of information, media, and technology. The English teachers' role as technology experts coincides with students' skills in the 21st century namely information literacy, media literacy, and ICT literacy (Handayani, 2018; Khairunnisa et al., 2022).

Currently in Indonesia, the government, especially the Ministry of National Education, is responding to the rapid development of ICT by modernizing education (Sumardi et al., 2020). Then, several schools in Indonesia allow students to bring the technology in the classroom related to learning. Therefore, ICT literacy is one of the roles that teachers must have. Technology helps teachers to create innovative teaching strategies by providing interesting activities that help students improve their competence.

To deal with these issues, teachers put forward to have a positive perception of 21st-century learning. It can be observed that teachers agreed that technology is a key factor in supporting 21st-century learning. Research conducted by Fima et al., (2024) showed that using ICT in teaching and learning English could develop students' 21st-century skills. Fatimah (2017) found that some teachers have a good perception of 21st-century learning. Nurhidayat et al., also found that technology integration and teacher competency significantly influence the development of 21st-century learning.

The previous research explained that, most teachers use a PC or computer, projector, PowerPoint presentation, digital music, or songs and videos in their teaching. They use these technologies mainly as the media to deliver the material. Furthermore, they are unhesitatingly using technology influenced by their beliefs toward technology itself (Simonsson, 2004; Gilakjani, 2012; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020; Jamil et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers' beliefs about technology can greatly impact teachers' ability to fulfill the roles of a 21st-century English teacher.

However, Junaidia et al., (2020) stated that many teachers were still ineffective in using ICT to teach English, and very few even believed that their teaching was more successful if they used ICT facilities. Qaddumi et al.,(2021) exhibited that EFL teachers in public schools in Palestine believed that information communication and technology have great potential in supporting English learning, despite that there remain obstacles to its implementation. Also, Arif & Mutiaraningrum (2020) found that EFL teachers hesitate to utilize digital devices and lack preparation in their teaching practices. Responding to this case, English teachers today should be able to utilize technology in their teaching practice to respond to the challenges of the times. In other word, the English teachers should play their role as technology expert. According to this phenomena the researchers conducted the research deal with teachers' belief in technology, specifically focuses on teachers' role as technology experts.

To conduct this research, the researchers used The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was developed by Fred Davis in 1989. TAM explains how and when users decide to accept and use a technology. TAM theory is divided into two important points, perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) which leads to the actual use of a particular technology or system. Perceived usefulness (PU) is defined as the level of individual belief that using a system will increase productivity, while perceived ease of use (PEU) is defined as the level of individual belief that using a particular system will be free from effort (Davis, 1989; Anggraini et al., 2022).

TAM theory explains that an individual's behavioral intention to take on a system or technological innovation is set on by two beliefs, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Davis (1989) also states that there is an association between user beliefs about the usefulness of a technology and attitudes and intentions to use the technology. Furthermore, a person approves of using technology if he or she considers it appropriate, serviceable, and socially valuable even if he or she does not delight in using technology. Thus, there may be a straight-through connection between beliefs and intentions. Furthermore, Atsoglou & Jimoyiannis (2012) stated that perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which a person considers technology to enhance or improve their performance such as making classes interesting. In addition, Chung (2014) found that perceived usefulness is related to the benefits of technology.

It can be said that teachers' beliefs about technology can greatly impact their ability to fulfill the roles of a 21st-century English teacher. In the 21st century, the role of the teacher has evolved to include not only transmitting knowledge but also facilitating student-centered learning, promoting critical thinking, and incorporating technology in the classroom. Thus, this present study was conducted for the purpose of discovering teachers' belief in technology regarding teachers' role in the 21st century specifically focuses on teachers' role as technology experts.

METHODS

The researchers used qualitative design to collect and analyze data. Creswell (2012) stated qualitative research is a process that analyzes words to group them into larger meanings of understanding, such as codes, categories, or themes. It can be concluded that a qualitative research method was suitable for investigating teacher belief in using technology because the researcher identified patterns and themes in the data that can inform the development of effective strategies and interventions to enhance teacher use of technology in the classroom.

Participants of this research were two English teachers at SMK Negeri 6 Padang that selected using purposive sampling, who are familiar with and use technology in their teaching practice. The data collected through semi-structured interviews was recorded by an audio recorder in the teachers' room. The interview used Indonesia because conducting interviews in Indonesia would ensure better understanding and participation from the participants. The data was analyzed by content analysis (Bryman, 2016) with several steps; transcription, coding, categorization, theme identification, and interpretation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the interviews, the researcher obtained data about teachers' belief in technology regarding teachers' role in the 21st century specifically focusing on teachers' role as technology experts. The evidence obtained from the interview was presented as follows:

Perceived Ease of Use

The first indicator, perceived ease of use which consists of two sub-indicators; teachers' level of confidence in using technology and Teachers' simplicity of comprehending on operating technology. The confidence level is seen in teachers who use technology in the classroom and do not feel nervous when using it. Based on the teacher's statement in the interview, English teachers use several technologies when teaching English, namely laptops, projectors, tape recorders/speakers, mobile phones, learning videos, PowerPoint, Quizzes, and Canva. This statement can be seen from the results of interviews with teachers, as follows:

Teacher 1

“All right, for the use of digital technology in class, I use several kinds of technology, for example in the use of equipment by using a projector and it can also use cell phones. Each student uses their cell phone, and in the listening section, we use a tape recorder or speakers connected to our computer. My way of using this technology is to look at the topics or themes that I teach, for example, I teach about narrative text, so for narrative text I will usually use film media. My students watch films related to narrative text. Then my students can explain about the film. That's what we use in utilizing technology in class in matters of narrative text. We can also develop this, for example, my students take tests using Quizzes on their cell phones, then my students can immediately find out the scores have obtained.”

Teacher 2

“Yes, I have. Regarding PPT technology, it is usually used for presentations to explain materials to students. I can also use Canva for the latest ones, that's one of them. I try to design it first at home, like what materials I will target, the points are made in PowerPoint form.”

Then, teachers believed that technology was easy to use as long as they wanted to learn. Easy or difficult it depends on the situation and conditions. It's easy if the facilities are there, supported by teachers' statements as follows:

Teacher 1

”Easy or difficult it depends on the situation and conditions. It's easy if the facilities are there, for example, we need to use Infocus in the class, unfortunately, the available projector is few. So, we have to make a reservation before making a request. If it's difficult, sometimes it can be difficult. Hope, every class is provided by projectors.”

Teacher 2

“So far, if we want to learn how to use technology, it doesn't seem difficult, right?”

This means that teachers use technology without difficulties in using or operating it. Based on the statements of teachers in the interview, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 believe that technology is easy to use, however, both of them face the same barriers to using technology in the classroom. This is due to the limited number of technology facilities in schools. The limitation of the internet network presents problems in the classroom.

Teacher 1

“I experience these difficulties sometimes. For example, play movies that are directly connected to YouTube. So, my difficulty in the middle of the implementation is that we play movies and then the internet network goes out or the electricity goes out. Then if we use cellphones sometimes students don't have data packets. So not all students can follow the learning. So, the network is important in this world of IT, that's what causes the difficulty there.”

Teacher 2

“This difficulty could be from a technical point of view maybe for installation and all kinds of things, right, if you get used to it it's not too difficult, it's only possible when I use it, the amount and quantity is limited. So, to get it, it feels like I have to share it with other friends. It's difficult in terms of quantity.”

Based on the results of the data interview above, it can be concluded that teachers' beliefs regarding the perceived ease of using technology in the classroom were various. While both teachers have demonstrated confidence in utilizing technology, they have technical issues and limited availability of resources. Enhancing technical support and infrastructure, and continuous professional development were suggested as potential strategies to improve the ease of technology use in the school environment.

Perceived of Usefulness

The second indicator perceived usefulness consists of one sub-indicator, technology can enhance and improve teachers' performance. This sub-indicator deals with teachers' beliefs that technology supports their teaching practice. Technology was useful in improving their performance and made the classroom conditions interesting in the teaching and learning process. Based on the interview, Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 believed that technology gave many benefits to support the teaching and learning process. It can improve students' interest, involvement, and understanding and facilitate teachers delivering material more effectively when technology is used in teaching and learning. So far teacher 1 still cannot specify which technology to be useful in her learning process because she is selective in choosing technology relevant to learning material. Then teacher 2

assumed the game related to learning might be more useful. It can be seen in teachers' statements as follows:

Teacher 1

"The use of technology has a very positive impact on the learning process with the condition that we don't let go of students. So, we have to accompany these students and have full control."

Teacher 2

"Yes, it's very impactful, especially nowadays, these students are dominantly interested in technology, more interested in cell phones, or more interested in looking at pictures or videos for learning. So, they are more interested in that kind of learning than just two-way lessons between students and teachers."

Based on teachers' teaching experience, they believed there was usefulness technology in the classroom, supported by their statements as follows:

Teacher 1,

"The use of technology in the class is very good because it is very helpful for students' understanding. We have proven that in one class we don't use technology at all, we only use textbooks and then we are given assignments, while in another class we use technology, the results are different, the interest is different, the scores are different, and t. But if the class uses technology, they will automatically be eager to learn and understand better."

Teacher 2

"It feels like if we use technology, the atmosphere is more active and they are more motivated, they're happier too. So, in terms of learning, we prioritize them to be happy first, then they will start learning. If they enjoy it, they are happy, hopefully they will want to take part in learning."

If technology has many benefits, there are disadvantages to be gained when implementing it in the learning and teaching process. In this study, it was found that teachers believe that technology provides many benefits if we are selective in using technology, such as games that are not related to learning material so that they can distract students' concentration in learning. It was supported by the statements below:

Teacher 1

"In my opinion, technology has provided benefits. Of course, we have to choose the technology that we will use. It must be by the material and topic that will be used. I don't think there is an application that is useless in the learning process. The point is that we have to be selective; we have to choose what we will use and adjust it to the material or teaching materials that we will use for students. We don't choose just any technology."

Teacher 2

"Maybe like games, there are more negative sides if they play games, but if it is linked to learning, games may be more beneficial. But if it is not linked, it is also a shame if they waste their time."

Based on the interview results, it was found that English teachers' beliefs about the use of technology in the classroom were positive. They play the role of technology experts. In line with the results of Voet and Wever's (2017) study. They found that most teachers had positive beliefs about technology. This is also supported by the results of Nugroho & Matra's (2022) study that teachers have positive beliefs in integrating ICT in the classroom, believing that ICT can develop and improve students' skills. Teachers in this study acknowledged that technology is easy to use depending on the situation and conditions. Then, they also believe in the positive impact of technology on the learning process. They recognized that student interest in technology and believed that integrating it into lessons would increase student engagement.

The use of technology has been proven to be beneficial in improving students' understanding and motivation. This is supported by Singh (2019) who found that students felt highly motivated and attentive in their learning because of the use of modern technological tools with multimedia effects that successfully attracted their attention during classroom learning. Teachers highlighted the advantages of technology such as effectiveness. Its relevance to Rahmati & Izadpanah, (2021) revealed that utilizing technology is more effective than traditional teaching methods without technology for the quality of English language teaching. Participants emphasized the overall improvement in the learning environment through technology. Teachers emphasized the importance of careful selection and alignment of technology with the curriculum.

In the technology usability indicator, teachers carry out maximum strategies in utilizing technology such as using the Quizzez application to evaluate student understanding and using learning videos relevant to the learning material as a strategy to attract students' interest in following the English learning process. This is supported by Wrahatnolo & Munoto (2018) who stated that education in the 21st century is important to ensure that students can learn and innovate, utilize technology and information media, and work by applying life skills. The results indicate that English teachers in the present study are creative in the teaching process. In addition, teachers have followed the characteristics of 21st-century learning because English teachers are capable and innovative and bring new technology into the classroom. Based on the discussion, English teachers have positive beliefs about one of the roles of 21st-century teachers in ELT.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that English teachers at SMK Negeri 6 Padang already have a positive belief in one of the roles of the teacher in the 21st century, namely the teacher's role as a technology expert. However, it is also found teachers had difficulties when utilizing technology in the classroom such as problems with internet networks. It lines with the research Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum (2020) EFL teachers acknowledge a strong belief in the importance of digital technology in language learning, but digital resources and facilitation are limited.

Teachers' belief in technology can greatly impact their ability to fulfill the roles of 21st-century English teachers. In this present study, teachers have positive beliefs about utilizing ELT. Teachers believe technology is easy to use if a technology facility is available and want to learn to integrate it. Teachers believe technology supports teaching and learning processes in the classroom,

making the class more interesting, increasing students' involvement and understanding, and helping teachers explain the learning material more effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that teachers at SMK Negeri 6 Padang already have positive beliefs about one of the roles of teachers in the 21st century, namely the role of teachers as technology experts. However, it was also found that teachers experienced obstacles in technological support at school such as projectors and internet networks that were facilitated were still limited. One of the issues that emerged from these findings is that technology has a positive impact on supporting interactive, innovative, and creative learning and teaching. Therefore, it is hoped that teachers can bring technology into the classroom without feeling unsafe or nervous about using it. Schools, governments, and related parties can help teachers facilitate technology to support the success of teachers in creating interesting classes for students utilizing technology. Hopefully, this study can be a good guideline and reference material for further research and can review further research related to this issue with different methods such as quantitative design.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There are no conflicts to declare under a Conflicts of interest.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MV. Conceived of the presented idea and supervised the finding of this work. MV. MHD. YUL. SHA developed the theory. SHA collecting the data. YUL verified the analytical methods. All authors discussed the results and contributed to the final manuscript.

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