

Challenges in the Integration of Digital Literacy in English Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT

With the tremendous technological developments of this century blurring the line between online and offline activities, the emergence of the digital world is inevitable. By the proliferation of new technologies, digital awareness for the safe, appropriate and efficient selection and management of digital resources for digital learning education is becoming important. In the context of English Language Teaching, the proportion of ICT in the learning process is increasingly high. However, there may be some barriers that affect the familiarity and motivation of the relevant learning components. To answer the research question on challenging aspect of the integration of digital literacy in ELT, a systematic review of 20 articles sourced from Google scholar is executed. It reveals that the challenges are generally resulted from students, teachers, and schools' preparedness; which involves low operational skill; limited access to computer and internet; and the lack of proper learning materials that covers media literacy.

Keywords: *Digital Literacy, English Language Teaching, Systematic Literature Review*

INTRODUCTION

In an era defined by rapid technological advancements and a paradigm shift towards digital communication, the field of English language teaching finds itself at a crucial crossroads. The integration of digital literacy into pedagogical practices has emerged as a compelling imperative, promising to equip learners with the skills necessary for effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world. However, as educators endeavor to harness the power of technology in language instruction, they are confronted with a myriad of challenges that underscore the complexities of this transformative journey. Technology integration pervades a variety of situations in the transformation and use of digital tools to achieve educational objectives that transcend curriculum (Laksiani et al., 2020.). Baxa & Christ (2017) proposes the concept of digital literacy as the optimal application for ICT. It focuses primarily on the use of digital tools in English language teaching.

Early work by Maru et al. (2021) on the integration of ICT into ELT practices shows that teacher knowledge and perceptions from an integration perspective to be increased. The proportion of ICT in the learning process during a pandemic is very high. However, there may be some barriers that affect the familiarity and motivation of the relevant learning components.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to explore the answers to the following question:

1. What are the challenges of the integration of digital literacy in English language teaching?.

Literacy is derived from the Latin *littera* (letter), and it refers to the ability to read and write. ‘Literacy’ traditionally means the ability to read and write. Someone who can’t read or write is called ‘illiterate’. But reading and writing themselves are complicated processes. Reading and writing in different situations requires very different skills. (Jones & Hafner, 2012). One’s writing in social media posts may differ with their writing of academic purpose. The reason for this is that we are not just trying to make different kinds of meanings, but also to establish different kinds of relationships and enact different kinds of social identities. reading and writing often involve encoding and decoding more than just language. They might also involve using and interpreting pictures, the spatial layout of pages or the organizational structures of texts.

Jones and Hafner (2012) stated that that literacy is not just a matter of things that are going on inside people’s heads – cognitive processes of encoding and decoding words and sentences – but rather a matter of all sorts of interpersonal and social processes. Literacy is not just a way of making meaning, but also a way of relating to other people and showing who we are, a way of doing things in the world, and a way of developing new ideas about and solutions to the problems that face us. In a broader context, literacy refers to a person's capacity for processing and comprehending the meaning of literacy. The sense of literacy continues to evolve in lockstep with

the changes so that literacy has been adopted in various fields of science and imparts meaning relevant to the context and the field used. This understanding then gave birth to the terminology of global awareness literacy, financial literacy, entrepreneurial literacy, citizenship literacy, health literacy, environmental literacy, and finally, resulting in the concept of digital literacy. (Menggo et al., 2021)

Concept of Digital Literacy

Work on digital literacies has begun to address the issue of what it means to be a literate member of society in the digital age. The term digital literacy is one of many that have been used to engage with the changing landscape of digital media (Hafner et al., 2015). Digital Literacy (DL) is defined as the ability to use information and communication technology to communicate with cognitive and technical skills (Butarbutar, et al., 2021) Digital literacy is the knowledge and skill to use digital media, communication tools, or networks in finding, evaluating, using, making information, and using it in a healthy, wise, intelligent, accurate, precise, and law-abiding manner to foster communication and interaction in daily life. Hafner, Chik, Rodney go on to point out that digital literacies can be seen as either: the acquisition of information age skills; the cultivation of habits of mind; or the engagement in digital cultures and practices. To be digitally literate is more than knowing how to use a smart phone or accessing music videos on YouTube. It means having the knowledge and ability to use a wide range of technology tools for a variety of purposes. A digitally literate person can use technology strategically to discover and evaluate information, connect and collaborate with others, produce and share original content, and use the Internet and technology tools to achieve many academic, professional, and personal goals (Maitiri et al., 2019).

The disruption in the era of digital technology encourages all stakeholders to display creativity, initiative and adaptive power to take advantage of the various opportunities that occur due to the development of digital technology, which continues to have a good impact on the lives of the wider community.

Digital Literacy in ELT

Digital technology is a tool that enables more efficient human work patterns. For this reason, students must possess digital literacy in order to be knowledgeable, competitive, and able to capitalize on numerous digital business opportunities. Digital literacy is the capacity of an individual to seek, comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and disseminate knowledge through digital technology developments that are often connected to an internet network. the use of media in learning English emerged as the purpose of the learning media application is to assist educators in transferring messages and English lesson content to students; students with students; and fellow teachers so that the curriculum goals will be achieved more efficiently. It is undeniable that the role of digital media is easier to understand, more interesting, and more enjoyable for all learning participants in digital era (Susanty, 2021).

In the midst of the Covid19 pandemic, a rule emerged, especially in Indonesia, where Indonesians are required to maintain a minimum distance from one another. Indonesians are forced to stay at home and do all activities from home such as working from home, and learning from home. With the existence of rules for activities from home such as working from home, studying from home, the role of technology is essential to carry out these activities (Kodri, 2020).

Being digital literate is much more necessary because teaching or learning language is one of the most common fields using technology. Our classes are being designed based on technological tools. As our target groups are born with technology, they are eager to utilize technology much more in their classes, too. So, the language learners ought to improve their digital literacy a lot to be able to take part in the digital environment in a new language (Hafner et al., 2015). Digital literacy is useful to assist students in filtering information obtained through digital media, thus digital literacy is a skill that must be mastered by the digital native in the 21st Century (Bekker et al., 2015). In these conditions, educators and learners need to master technology and use it in learning (Alfia et al., 2020).

Digital literacy skills are fully crucial to support students academically and professionally such as studying at school, getting better jobs, participating and interacting in the community, obtaining community services, accessing education and training at a higher level, facilitating more autonomous language learning, and provide access to other conveniences of life.

METHODOLOGY

The study compares and synthesizes 20 articles related to the integration of digital literacy in English Language Teaching. The articles are selected based on the research topic about digital literacy integration in ELT and taken from reputable journals published during 2019-2023. The articles are compiled based on the keywords of “Digital literacy in English Language Teaching”. The articles reviewed are from journals that were accessed and found through the application Publish or Perish by using Google Scholar search engine. To analyze the data, the researcher defines the objective of the study, review and analyze content of the selected articles based on the integration and challenges of the digital literacy in English language teaching. by examining all the data collected through three steps of qualitative data analysis which are data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing.

Types of Criterion	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Types of publication	Journal articles	x	
	Conference papers	x	

	Reports	x	
	Disertations	x	
	Books		x
Access	Online Paper	x	x
Publication period	2019-2023	x	
Place of publication	Asia	x	
Type of study	Empirical investigaion Theoretical studies	x x	
Research Methods	Qualitative Quantiative	x x	

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of publication	Study	Reports
N	17	3

Table 2 Texts by type of publication

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
2	8	3	4	3

Table 3 Texts by the year of publication

Based on the review of the articles under the topic of digital literacy in English Language Teaching (ELT), there are numbers of challenges to overcome in the integrating digital literacy. These chalenges involve students, teachers and schools' preparedness, this include; operational skill; limited access to computer and internet access at school/campus; and the lack of coverage of media literacy in learning materials.

Students, Teachers and School Preparedness

One of the foremost challenges in the integration of digital literacy in English Language Teaching (ELT) lies in the preparedness of students to navigate the digital realm effectively. While the younger generation may be considered 'digital natives,' possessing a familiarity with technology, this does not necessarily translate into comprehensive digital literacy. Students often face challenges in discerning reliable information from the vast online landscape, critically evaluating digital content, and utilizing diverse digital tools for language learning. The inherent

assumption that students automatically possess the requisite digital skills can lead to an oversight of the need for explicit instruction and guidance in cultivating robust digital literacy within an ELT context.

Equally significant is the challenge posed by the preparedness of teachers tasked with integrating digital literacy into English language instruction. Many educators may find themselves navigating unfamiliar technological terrain, grappling with the rapid evolution of digital tools and platforms. The demand for a nuanced understanding of how to leverage technology for language acquisition, coupled with the ability to foster critical digital thinking skills, places a burden on educators to continually update their pedagogical approaches. The need for teacher professional development programs that address these specific challenges and provide ongoing support becomes apparent, acknowledging that effective integration requires more than a basic familiarity with digital tools.

Beyond the individual realms of students and teachers, the preparedness of educational institutions as a whole presents a substantial challenge. Schools must grapple with issues of equitable access to digital resources, ensuring that all students have the tools and connectivity required for effective digital literacy development. Moreover, schools must align their curricula and policies with the ever-evolving landscape of digital literacy, fostering an environment that encourages experimentation, adaptation, and the integration of innovative teaching methodologies. The integration of digital literacy should not be seen as an isolated initiative but rather as an integral component woven into the broader fabric of the school's educational mission.

A study by Situmorang et al. (2020) has scrutinized the teachers' preparedness in digital literacy, digital classroom, and digital assessment in a period after the emergency remote learning. The findings have indicated that the students assess their teachers to be positively capable in some aspects - pointing out the positive experiences the students have during the online learning. Reflecting nine months ago when both teachers and students were panicked and knew nothing to do; this progress is appreciated. In the future, the teachers will need to keep upgrading their digital literacy, digital classroom management, and the digital assessment used in the class. Online learning will be part of the fixed and permanent system in education, mostly in the field of teaching and learning. In addition there is a significant correlation among teachers' ICT literacy levels with their training experiences, internet frequency usage, and ICTs integration in language teaching (Sulistyo, 2020). Therefore, both teachers and students need to embrace the current process of maturing themselves in the online learning system fully. Stated in Daulay et al. (2020) Buckingham argued that digital literacy should make learners to evaluate online information. Thus Szabó (2019) suggested two essential factors in the literacy skills: providing pre- and in-service teachers training; introducing reforms in teaching.

In addition Kosnik et al. (2016) stated the need for upgrading teacher educators. According to Kosnik, This constant change in how we communicate means that we need teacher educators who can incorporate digital technology into their courses and facilitate discussion on being literate in the 21st century. In order to address the complexity of literacy in our 21st century we need to

move beyond the traditional boundaries of the disciplines. We believe part of the problem in moving forward is that most initiatives focus on a single issue (e.g., digital technology) whereas a multi-disciplinary approach is needed.

Limited Access to Computers and Internet

A year after the implementation of distance learning, students had adapted well and the level of anxiety they encountered was reduced. Yet, technical problems like unstable internet connection and devices' malfunction that occurred during distance learning still triggered much anxiety among students since that condition made them lose the opportunity to receive some important information and chances to actively participate in online activities as well as improve their skills (Hapsari, 2021). This is also in line by the study conducted by (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Prato & Solikhati, 2021; Oktaviani et al, 2023; Mah, A. A. Et al, 2023) that shows that the students' lack of facilities on smartphones, internet quota, and stable internet connection are still critical due to the financial condition of the students' families. A recent study by Eryansyah et al., (2019) on the topic of EFL students' needs of digital literacy to meet the demands of 21st century skills showed that EFL students' current level of digital literacy was categorized low. Factors affecting them from using ICT in language learning properly were limited use of ICT applications as a tool for language learning. Problems with weak signals which affect difficult internet access still remain a problem. Contents of online digital materials are not easy for young learners to interpret and convert into simple, self-regulated information. Moreover, digital literacy tools are considered to be expensive (Mudra, 2020).

Operational Skill

The lack of operational skills among both educators and students presents a formidable challenge in the seamless integration of digital literacy into English Language Teaching (ELT). While the theoretical understanding of the importance of digital literacy may be acknowledged, practical operational skills in navigating and utilizing digital tools often lag behind (Shaswar, 2022; Arsari 2022). Educators may grapple with incorporating technology seamlessly into their lesson plans, facing hurdles in selecting appropriate tools, troubleshooting technical issues, and effectively integrating digital resources into language instruction. On the student front, a deficit in operational skills can manifest as an impediment to independently engage with digital platforms for language learning. Bridging this gap requires targeted professional development for educators, empowering them with the hands-on expertise necessary to navigate the digital landscape with confidence. Simultaneously, students need explicit instruction and practice in utilizing digital tools to enhance their language proficiency, fostering a generation adept not only in linguistic competence but also in the operational fluency required for success in the digital age.

A study from Pertiwi and Mustafha (2020) shows another significant impact on communication through digital technologies in this case Schoology as LMS application. this communication nowadays can be conducted in a virtual class with assisted-technology devices. All the benefits can be experienced by the class community if they are familiar with how to

function all features available in the system. It is clearly seen that operational skill is also important to explore all benefits offered in the system.

A study by Hafifah (2020) that conducted to explore English educators' ICT literacy levels and to find out how far they have integrated ICT in language teaching in higher education settings in Indonesia reveals that, although most English teachers in Indonesia believe the importance and the usefulness of technology for teaching all skills of English, most teachers do not have the ICT pedagogy that they can implement in their classroom although they have a positive attitude toward the development of technology (ICT) for language learning. It was revealed that more than 60 % of the participants' ICT literacy levels are above average and they frequently use ICT in their daily teaching, although they still face problems in internet facility and lack of ICT training.

There are now abundant calls for language educators to rethink the language curriculum and develop pedagogies that cater to language learners' digital literacies needs. One possible approach, stated by Hafner, Chic and Jones (2015) involves the use of what they call "bridging activities". Learners are asked to find examples of new media communication that they themselves have participated in such as instant messaging, blogs and wikis, remixing, and multiplayer online gaming. By applying discourse analytical techniques, learners explicitly analyze these examples, with the aim of developing metalinguistic knowledge relevant to their online interactions

The lack of coverage of media literacy in learning materials

A conspicuous challenge in the integration of digital literacy into English Language Teaching (ELT) lies in the insufficient coverage of essential components such as global awareness, economic literacy, and media literacy within learning materials (Rinekso 2021; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Many existing curricula and learning resources may not adequately address the critical intersections between language proficiency and these vital literacy skills for the digital age. Global awareness is crucial for fostering cross-cultural communication and understanding, economic literacy equips learners with the skills to navigate the complexities of the global economy, and media literacy is essential for deciphering the vast array of digital information (Susanti, et al., 2021; Iskandar et al, 2022). The oversight in incorporating these elements into ELT materials hinders students from developing a comprehensive set of digital literacy skills necessary for active and informed participation in today's interconnected world. Addressing this gap requires a concerted effort to reevaluate and update learning materials, ensuring they align with the multifaceted demands of 21st-century digital literacy education.

Rinekso (2021) consider the inclusion of 21st century skills especially global awareness, ICT, media and economic literacy. The 4Cs (creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration skills) were also recommended to be integrated as it is the most prevalent skills of 21st century learning. This is intended to prepare our students surviving in a digital-competitive and disruptive era. Likewise, materials developers have to keep up to date in designing textbooks by following the dynamic changes of world due to the impact of technology development and

globalization. Thus, infusing 21st century skills to secondary school textbooks will be a strategic way to prepare students early facing the multifaceted and complex life situation.

CONCLUSION

This study is a literature review of numbers existing articles on the topic of digital literacy in English language teaching. The study highlight challenging aspects in the integration of digital literacy in ELT that involve students, teachers and schools' preparedness. This include;

- 1) operational skill;
- 2) limited access to computer and internet access at campus;
- 3) and the lack of coverage of media literacy in learning materials.

More frequent training and stronger policy support of ICT facilities from the institution and government would be advantageous to encourage greater ICT integration in education, especially in ELT. Due to the time constraint, the study is limited to 20 articles only and mostly specifying on the higher education. Therefore, it is recommended to the future study of related topic to enrich the review sources and broaden the scopes in other areas, such as on the aspect of younger learners.

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