

DIGITAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING: CHARTING FUTURE PATHWAYS FOR GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING

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Abstract

This comprehensive review study explores the crucial role of digital literacy in English Language Teaching (ELT) and its transformative potential in promoting global understanding. Through a rigorous and systematic analysis of peer-reviewed literature, this synthesis offers an extensive examination of contemporary perspectives on the diverse impact of digital literacy in ELT contexts.

The study highlights the increasing importance of integrating digital literacy into ELT practices, particularly within the evolving landscape of modern education. Methodologically, the review thoroughly investigates a wide range of scholarly articles, research studies, and pedagogical frameworks, ensuring an in-depth exploration and synthesis of existing knowledge.

Beyond presenting key trends and insights, this review emphasizes the essential role of educators in guiding future directions toward a more interconnected and harmonious world. The inclusion of the researcher's insights, derived from the synthesis process, adds depth and personal perspectives, illuminating the significant impact of digital literacy in bridging cultural and linguistic divides within the ELT domain.

Additionally, the review extends into practical applications by discussing actionable strategies and classroom implications for effectively integrating digital literacy into ELT practices. This detailed review, with its practical takeaways for educators, makes a substantial contribution to emerging trends in English Language Teaching (ELT), offering valuable perspectives on envisioning future educational directions. It provides important insights into how digital literacy can act as a powerful catalyst for positive change, fostering unity across diverse cultural and linguistic landscapes.

Keywords: Digital literacy, English language teaching, global understanding, future paths, inclusive education.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, the integration of digital literacy has emerged as a crucial component within English Language Teaching (ELT), offering transformative opportunities for fostering global understanding. Additionally, digital literacy must be identified and understood within a particular context (Bilki, Satar, & Sak, 2022). Therefore, this comprehensive review study investigates the pivotal role of digital literacy in ELT contexts and its potential to transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries towards a more interconnected world.

Through a meticulous analysis of peer-reviewed literature, this synthesis delves into current perspectives on the multifaceted impact of digital literacy in ELT practices. It highlights the escalating relevance of digital

literacy within the dynamic educational environment and underscores the imperative for educators to navigate future pathways towards greater global harmony.

The review methodologically examines a diverse range of scholarly articles, research studies, and pedagogical frameworks, ensuring a thorough investigation and synthesis of existing knowledge. By presenting key trends and insights, the study emphasizes the critical need for educators to embrace digital literacy as a catalyst for positive change within ELT.

Beyond theoretical exploration, the review addresses practical strategies and classroom implications for effectively integrating digital literacy into ELT practices. It offers actionable recommendations for educators to enhance inclusivity and cultural understanding through digital tools and resources.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the researcher's insights gained through the synthesis process enriches the exploration, providing personal perspectives on the profound influence of digital literacy in transcending cultural and linguistic boundaries within the ELT domain.

This in-depth review contributes significantly to new trends in English Language Teaching, offering valuable insights into envisioning future paths in education. By highlighting digital literacy's potential to foster unity across diverse cultural and linguistic landscapes, this study advocates for an inclusive and globally oriented approach to ELT.

1.1 Understanding and the impact of digital literacy in ELT

Kress (2006) defines digital literacy as the skill set required to effectively utilize technology for information management, building upon traditional literacies such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, encompassing facets of information literacy, media literacy, and technological proficiency (Kress, 2006). Digital literacy encompasses the skills and competencies required to effectively navigate, evaluate, and utilize digital technologies. In the context of ELT, digital literacy extends beyond basic technological proficiency to encompass the ability to critically engage with digital resources, collaborate in online environments, and leverage technology to enhance language learning outcomes (Churchill, 2016).

A systematic analysis of peer-reviewed literature reveals a growing consensus on the significance of digital literacy in reshaping ELT practices. Digital tools and resources offer diverse opportunities for language learners to engage with authentic language materials, participate in global communities, and develop intercultural competence. Laeli, Setiawan, and Anam (2020) explore the impact of 21st-century technological advancements on English language teaching and learning, particularly focusing on the shift from printed to digital texts. This case study investigates the perceptions and practices of 23 English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers in junior and senior high schools across East Java regarding reading digital texts. The study suggests that these study results can inform ELT curriculum development by addressing the necessity to integrate new literacies, particularly online reading skills, into classroom practices. It emphasizes the importance of professional development for teachers to enhance their competencies in reading digital texts and recognize the significance of online reading literacy for students' success in today's digital information age (Laeli, Setiawan, & Anam, 2020).

1.2 Navigating Future Pathways for Global Understanding: Bridging the Digital Divide

Educators play a pivotal role in shaping the future of ELT by integrating digital literacy into pedagogical approaches. As technology continues to evolve, educators must adapt their practices to leverage digital tools effectively. This involves embracing innovative teaching strategies, fostering digital citizenship, and promoting critical thinking skills in digital contexts. Iskandar et al. (2022) highlight the critical role of digital literacy within the multiliteracy framework necessary for success in the digital era, noting its importance as a cross-curricular competency that is often overlooked in English language teaching (ELT). Their study aims to explore the traits of authentic academic digital practices within English language skills course outlines that promote digital literacy development. It assesses the current infusion of digital literacy in these practices and proposes a method for enhancing digital literacy within the context of ELT. The findings recognize various authentic academic digital practices, including responses to questions, essays, presentation slides, papers, videos, podcasts, and reports. However, these digital academic products are primarily utilized as mediums for English language use, with an emphasis solely on English proficiency. The research proposes a structured approach to infusing digital literacy into authentic academic digital practices of English language teaching, involving five key stages:

1. Identifying components of digital literacies and authentic academic digital practices/products.
2. Analyzing descriptors of digital literacy components relevant to these practices/products.

3. Integrating these descriptors into learning outcomes.
4. Embedding digital literacies within academic products.
5. Employing authentic academic digital practices in the learning process and assessing digital literacies as cross-curricular competencies.

This methodological approach can bridge the gap between traditional English language skills instruction and the digital literacy demands of the modern era, facilitating comprehensive skill development for students (Iskandar, Sumarni, Dewanti, & Asnur, 2022).

As digital technologies continue to shape the future of education, it is essential to address digital equity and inclusion. Access to digital resources and training must be equitable for all learners and educators, regardless of socio-economic background or geographical location. Bridging the digital divide ensures that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from digital literacy in ELT. By incorporating digital literacy into ELT, educators can foster global understanding and empathy among learners. Digital platforms facilitate cross-cultural exchanges, enabling students to interact with peers from different backgrounds and perspectives (Wiraningsih & Santosa, 2020). This exposure cultivates cultural awareness and encourages open-mindedness, essential qualities for global citizens in the 21st century.

1.3 Digital Literacy for Educators

For teachers in the field of ELT, digital literacy is indispensable. It encompasses the ability to leverage technology effectively to enhance teaching practices, engage students in meaningful learning experiences, and navigate the complexities of digital resources. Educators with strong digital literacy skills can integrate digital tools into lesson planning to create interactive and dynamic learning environments, foster collaboration among students through online platforms, enabling peer learning and cultural exchange; and also continuously update their skills and knowledge in digital technologies to adapt to evolving educational trends. Durriyah and Zuhdi (2018) highlight a significant disparity where language teachers, despite being active digital technology users, exhibit reluctance in utilizing these technologies for literacy teaching purposes. The study stresses the urgent need to prepare language teachers for effective technology integration in education (Durriyah & Zuhdi, 2018). Furthermore, Kurniawati, Maolida, and Anjaniputra (2018) address the gap in research regarding digital media literacy among distinct generations of English teachers within the context of senior high school classrooms. This descriptive qualitative study investigates how digital literacy is utilized by both digital immigrant and digital native teachers, and how their students respond to the integration of digital media in English language teaching (ELT). The findings reveal that both generations of teachers are in the adaptation stage of digital literacy, with the digital immigrant teacher demonstrating more practical adeptness in implementing digital media. In terms of student responses, there is a positive reception toward the use of digital technology by teachers to enhance the English classroom experience, making lessons more engaging and comprehensible. The study underscores the necessity for English teachers to enhance their digital literacy skills to meet the demands of professional teaching in the digital era. The findings contribute valuable insights into the praxis of digital literacy within EFL classrooms, highlighting the ongoing need for teacher development in digital proficiency (Kurniawati, Maolida, & Anjaniputra, 2018).

On the other hand, Weninger (2023) addresses the widespread recognition of digital literacy as a crucial attribute for educated citizens and a competitive workforce, leading to numerous proposed frameworks for its integration into educational institutions. However, while there is agreement on the definition of digital literacy, scholarly discussions often overlook its fundamental nature as an ideological practice. The study explores the concept of digital literacy as an ideological practice and its implications for teaching, especially in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. Weninger critiques the prevailing emphasis on digital literacy as a set of skills and advocates for a shift toward understanding and developing digital literacy as a social practice. By reframing digital literacy as an ideological practice, the study encourages a deeper examination of the societal and cultural dimensions of digital skills. This perspective prompts educators to consider how digital literacy is shaped by broader ideologies and power structures, highlighting the need for pedagogical approaches that foster critical engagement with digital technologies within educational settings (Weninger, 2023).

Additionally, Rini and Nabhan (2023) address the growing importance of critical digital literacy in today's technology-driven world, particularly within higher education where it has been integrated into the curriculum to enable students to critically engage with digital information. Despite this emphasis, research on critical digital literacy in EFL settings at the university level remains limited. In this study, the researchers aimed to explore teachers' perspectives on critical digital literacy and their practices in integrating it into EFL classrooms at university. The findings revealed two main themes: teachers' views on critical digital literacy in

EFL classrooms and teachers' practices of critical digital literacy integration. Teachers demonstrated an understanding of the critical use of technology, recognized the importance of students' critical digital literacy, and acknowledged the need to incorporate critical digital literacy into language learning in response to technological advancements. Teachers' practices included providing various online materials and platforms, analyzing internet sources for digital materials, utilizing multimodal texts in learning, and fostering students' identity development in digital media. The study underscores the multidimensional nature of critical digital literacy, offers practical insights for integrating it into EFL classrooms, and emphasizes the need for effective instructional approaches that support technology use to promote critical digital literacy at the university level (Rini & Nabhan, 2023).

Rahman, Al-Qasri, and Ofara (2023) address the significant challenge faced by English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers in integrating digital literacy into the teaching and learning process in the 21st century. They emphasize that digital literacy has evolved beyond technical skills to fundamentally transform the approach learners take to education. This paradigm shift is evident among secondary school students at SMA IT Abhur Mataram, who increasingly rely on advanced utilities and web-based tools for creating and sharing meaning. The study aligns with the Global Digital Literacy Competency Framework established by UNESCO and employs a graphical representation to subjectively illustrate the advanced levels of English language learning at a high school. The authors identify seven key areas of higher education skills crucial for English learning: (1) Proficiency in equipment and software, (2) Mastery of data and information, (3) Effective communication and collaboration, (4) Content generation using computers, (5) Ensuring online security, (6) Problem-solving abilities, (7) Career-related skills. These areas of computer skills are systematically integrated into preparatory, intermediate, and concluding exercises within the English language curriculum at a high school. By aligning with UNESCO's digital literacy standards for the broader digital society, the study ensures a comprehensive and up-to-date approach to English education in the digital age, emphasizing the practical application of digital literacy within ELT contexts (Rahman, Al-Qasri, & Ofara, 2023).

In another study, Zhang (2023) explores the digital literacy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers and investigates the relationship between digital literacy and various factors such as gender, education level, and teaching experience. The study findings suggest that contextual factors such as gender, education level, and teaching experience do not significantly influence teachers' digital literacy skills. However, teachers' attitudes toward technology, their ability to use technology effectively, and their access to technology were identified as significant factors affecting digital literacy among EFL teachers. The implications of the study findings are discussed in depth in this paper, highlighting the importance of teachers' attitudes, skills, and access to technology in shaping their digital literacy. The study underscores the need for targeted interventions and professional development initiatives to enhance EFL teachers' digital literacy and maximize the benefits of digital technology in language education (Zhang, 2023).

The study by Kahveci (2021) investigated the relationship between digital literacy and teacher self-efficacy among foreign language educators in Turkey, examining variations based on teachers' gender, experience, major, participation in ICT training, and online engagement. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between digital literacy and teacher self-efficacy, with differences noted across experience levels, ICT training participation, and online activity. This study highlights the importance of digital literacy for enhancing teacher self-efficacy and suggests implications for further research and professional development in language education (Kahveci, 2021).

Lastly, Şahin (2023) highlights the impact of recent technological advancements on language teaching methods, emphasizing the need for language teachers to integrate technology effectively into their practices, including familiarity with the Metaverse and proficient use of digital tools to engage learners. This quantitative study investigates the relationship between language teachers' digital literacy, engagement with Web 2.0 applications, understanding of the Metaverse, and their readiness to adopt new teaching methods. The findings reveal significant correlations between teachers' digital literacy, use of Web 2.0 and Metaverse applications, and their openness to embracing new technologies. However, a notable number of teachers exhibit resistance to change and lack familiarity with recent technological advancements (Şahin, 2023).

As a result, by embracing digital literacy, educators can transcend traditional boundaries, enriching their teaching methodologies and empowering students to become proficient in 21st-century skills. Fostering digital literacy for language educators is pivotal to catch recent technological advancements and stay updated.

1.4 Empowering Students through Digital Literacy

In the realm of ELT, digital literacy empowers students to become active participants in their own learning journeys. Beyond basic computer skills, students with robust digital literacy can navigate online materials to

access authentic language content from diverse sources, engage in cross-cultural communication with peers and speakers of English worldwide, enhancing language proficiency and intercultural competence, evaluate and analyze digital information critically, distinguishing between credible and unreliable sources, and utilize multimedia tools to express ideas creatively and share their perspectives with a global audience. Mudra (2020) investigates perceptions of young learners and EFL teachers regarding the benefits and barriers of digital literacy in English language learning. The study findings highlight several benefits of digital literacy for young learners, including improvements in writing, reading, listening, and speaking skills, exposure to authentic materials, increased digital technology usage, and enhanced online collaboration between teachers and learners, as well as among learners themselves. However, the research also identifies significant barriers associated with digital literacy. These barriers include issues with weak internet signals affecting access, difficulties in interpreting and simplifying online content for young learners, and the perceived expense of digital literacy tools (Mudra, 2020). These challenges are attributed to the complexity of digital literacy tools, varying comprehension levels among young learners, and limited digital literacy experiences among both young learners and EFL teachers. In conclusion, the study's insights offer valuable considerations for effectively integrating digital literacy tools into young learners' educational experiences, emphasizing the need to address barriers while maximizing the benefits of digital technologies in English language teaching.

In addition, Hafner (2014) argues that English language teaching should expand its scope beyond traditional speech and writing to include the production of multimodal ensembles, leveraging various semiotic modes in response to evolving digital technologies. The article describes an undergraduate English for science course at a Hong Kong university that integrated digital literacies. Students engaged in a project to conduct a scientific experiment and report their findings through two formats: (1) a multimodal scientific documentary shared on YouTube for a general audience, and (2) a written lab report for specialists. The focus is on the students' multimodal scientific documentaries, evaluating their potential for language learning based on interviews, course blog comments, and the documentaries themselves. The analysis demonstrates how students successfully addressed the challenge of writing for an authentic audience by incorporating multiple modes, including language, to create effective rhetorical appeals and appropriate discursive identities (Hafner, 2014).

This review study concludes that by cultivating digital literacy among students, ELT programs nurture future-ready individuals equipped to thrive in a digital society and contribute to global dialogues.

2 CONCLUSION

The concept of digital literacies encompasses the skills of reading, writing, and communication facilitated by digital media. The articles featured in this special issue of *Language, Learning and Technology* delve into the impact of these digital practices on language learning. They explore two main areas: a) the evolving needs of language learners in the digital era, and b) the emergence of new globalized and online contexts for language acquisition. Specific topics covered include language learners' digital translanguaging on social networking sites, the role of language learning evidenced in YouTube comments outside of formal settings, language socialization through Wikipedia writing projects, and the digital practices adopted by language teachers both within and beyond traditional classroom environments (Hafner, Chick, & Jones, 2015). Additionally, Irwandi and Hidayati (2023) emphasize the increasing importance of integrating digital literacy into English Language Teaching (ELT). Their study investigates ELT's role in promoting digital literacy among English students and identifies specific digital literacy needs within this context. Results indicated students' keen interest in integrating digital literacy into ELT, highlighting various essential digital tools, platforms, and skills. Notably, participants emphasized the necessity of teacher guidance, language-specific digital resources, and training to support their digital literacy development. The study recommends integrating digital literacy development into the ELT curriculum, providing accessible resources tailored to language learners, and further exploring research opportunities in this domain (Irwandi & Hidayati, 2023).

In conclusion, digital literacy is a cornerstone of modern ELT, empowering educators and students to navigate a rapidly changing educational landscape (Hamidah, 2021). By embracing digital technologies and fostering digital literacy skills, ELT programs can cultivate global citizens who are proficient in English and equipped to thrive in a multicultural, interconnected world.

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