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Digital Literacy as a Critical Tool for English as a Foreign Language Teaching: A Teacher's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) encourages teachers to be more creative and innovative in providing English materials as well as developing a conducive environment for students. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of high school teachers about the role of digital literacy in Dumai. This type of research is descriptive quantitative using a questionnaire instrument consisting of 30 items. Data analysis used descriptive statistics in the form of total score, mean, standard deviation, then interpreted descriptively. The findings show that teachers have a very high perception. This result is evidenced by the mean score of the Questionnaire which was analyzed descriptively and asked about various indicators covering various aspects of digital literacy, such as understanding the definition and needs of media and information, technical skills, and critical judgment. Overall, teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy were positive and categorized as very high with an average score of 3.86. In conclusion, high school English teachers in Dumai have positive perceptions and provide significant benefits to the Role of Digital Literacy in English Teaching and Learning Activities.

Key Words: Digital Literacy; English as a Foreign Language; Perspective of English Teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy is an essential skill for teachers in the face of rapidly changing technology. This literacy is not only related to technical skills in operating devices such as computers, tablets or apps, but also involves the ability to understand, evaluate and apply technology in an educational context (Jiang et al., 2023). A digitally literate teacher should be able to integrate technology strategically to support the creation of a learning process that is not only informative but also innovative and relevant to students' needs. This ability as stated by Fang & Abdullah (2024), includes an understanding of information technology to manage and process data, media literacy to filter and critically analyze information, visual literacy to

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convey ideas through graphic media, and information literacy to ensure the accuracy and relevance of resources used.

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, Pangrazio et al., (2020) define that digital literacy is an important asset that enables teachers to create dynamic and engaging learning experiences. Teachers can utilize technology to provide interactive and contextualized learning materials, such as the use of learning videos, vocabulary training apps, virtual simulations and online discussion platforms. In addition, teachers with high digital literacy are able to access global resources, such as articles from international journals, multimedia teaching materials or Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based platforms, which help students enrich their understanding of English culture, vocabulary and contexts of use (Herdi et al., 2022).

Digital literacy also plays a role in building more effective communication between teachers and students (Colomar & Menn, 2024). By using digital communication tools such as online learning forums, discussion groups or learning management systems, teachers can provide quick and specific feedback to students, monitor learning progress and create a collaborative learning environment. These capabilities allow teachers to be more responsive to students' needs, making learning more personalized and relevant. With all the benefits it offers, digital literacy is no longer an option but a fundamental need for every teacher in the modern era (D. I. A. Putra & Hidayaturrahman, 2020). This ability supports the transformation of learning that not only prioritizes academic achievement but also prepares students to become adaptive and competent individuals in facing challenges in the digital world.

According to Berezki & Kárpáti (2021), digital literacy has great potential to improve the quality of learning, especially in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, its implementation in the school environment faces various complex challenges. One of the main challenges is the limited facilities and infrastructure available (Zboun & Farrah, 2021). Many schools, especially those in remote areas or with limited budgets, do not have adequate access to technological devices such as computers, laptops or tablets. In addition, poor or even unavailable internet connectivity in some locations further exacerbates the situation. This lack of infrastructure means that teachers and students cannot optimally access digital learning resources, online platforms or educational software, hindering the technology-based learning process.

In addition, limited technology skills among teachers are also a major obstacle in implementing digital literacy (Vodá et al., 2022). This is especially felt by senior teachers who may be less familiar with modern technological developments. The inability to use educational tools or applications effectively often makes them feel less confident, even reluctant to try new technology-based teaching methods. For example, a teacher who is unfamiliar with online learning platforms may take longer to prepare materials or feel pressured to learn new technologies amidst an already heavy workload (Abuhassna et al., 2020). Another factor that affects the success of digital literacy as discovered by Meşe & Sevilen (2021) is teachers' attitudes towards technology. Some teachers still see digital literacy as complicated or irrelevant to their learning needs. This attitude often arises from a lack of understanding of the benefits of technology in creating more interactive, creative and effective learning. As a result, they tend to stick with the traditional teaching methods they are used to, even though technology can provide a more efficient and engaging alternative for students (Matzembacher et al., 2019; Rizky & Zainil, 2021).

On the other hand, as proposed by Asare et al., (2023) and Maghfiroh & Indriastuti (2021), student motivation is also an important challenge. Although students today are generally familiar with technological devices, many of them use technology for entertainment

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such as playing games or socializing through social media, rather than to support learning. Students' low awareness of how technology can be used productively often hinders efforts to integrate digital literacy in the classroom. In fact, without proper supervision, students can be distracted from the learning objectives, resulting in a lack of digital literacy effectiveness (Havlik et al., 2019).

To overcome these challenges, continuous training for teachers is an urgent need. Fang & Abdullah (2024) argue that this training should not only aim to improve teachers' technical skills in using technology devices and applications but also provide relevant pedagogical strategies for integrating technology into the learning process. In addition, the training should be accompanied by continuous mentoring so that teachers can overcome obstacles that arise in implementing digital literacy (Maghfiroh & Indriastuti, 2021). With this approach, it is expected that digital literacy can be implemented effectively, providing tangible benefits to the learning process and creating a generation that is better prepared to face the challenges of the digital era.

The process of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has undergone fundamental changes as digital technology advances (Astuti et al., 2022). Previously, EFL learning was limited to traditional classrooms with face-to-face interaction between teachers and students, but now technology allows learning to transcend physical boundaries and time. Teachers and students can access learning materials anytime and anywhere, making learning more flexible and inclusive. Various digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom and social media have become key tools in supporting EFL learning (Sarwendah et al., 2023). Teachers can utilize these technologies to deliver materials, hold discussions, or even conduct online evaluations. Meanwhile, students can learn from a variety of sources, including interactive videos, app-based content and other online resources that support their all-round language skills, from reading, writing, listening to speaking.

This transformation also gives teachers the space to design more personalized and creative learning. With apps like Duolingo or Memrise, teachers can assign tasks that target listening and speaking skills. Bereczki & Kárpáti (2021) proposed that visual or interactive media, such as infographics or animated videos, can be integrated into grammar teaching to make abstract concepts easier to understand. In addition, the online platform allows teachers to provide immediate feedback, so students can immediately correct their mistakes and improve understanding quickly.

In this study, however, digital literacy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning is a very important topic to research, given that the rapid development of technology has brought significant changes in the way education is delivered and received. In the context of EFL learning, digital literacy refers to the ability of teachers and students to utilize technology effectively in English language learning, including the utilization of software, applications, and digital media to improve language skills (Aguilera & Pandya, 2021).

One potential research focus is teachers' perceptions of digital literacy, which includes how teachers understand, value and utilize technology in learning. This research is important because teachers' perceptions can influence how they integrate technology into their teaching. Teachers who have a positive view of technology are likely to be more proactive in adopting digital tools, while those who lack confidence or understanding of digital literacy may be reluctant to use them.

Research into teachers' perceptions of digital literacy can also provide insights into the challenges teachers face in integrating technology, such as lack of training, limited infrastructure or cultural barriers. In addition, this study has the opportunity to generate recommendations to improve teachers' competencies through targeted training, digital-based

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curriculum development and provision of adequate resources. In this way, the implementation of digital literacy in EFL learning can be improved so that teaching becomes more dynamic, interactive and relevant to students' needs in the digital era. It is hoped that this research will not only have an impact on improving teachers' technological skills but also contribute to the achievement of the greater educational goal of producing learners who are able to communicate effectively in English while having digital competencies that are in line with the demands of the times.

METHODS

Research design

This research uses a descriptive quantitative approach, which aims to measure and describe phenomena based on numerical data. This method, as explained by Cooksey (2020), relies on the process of quantifying and analyzing variables to obtain objective and measurable results. This process involves the use of numerical data that is analyzed using specific statistical techniques to answer key questions, such as "who, how many, what, where, when, and how." The focus is on providing an in-depth picture of the variables under study, through a systematic and number-based approach.

Research site and participants

This study was conducted in 43 public high schools in Dumai in the 2023/2024 academic year, with data collection in June 2024. The participants in this study were 294 English teachers of public high schools in Dumai (Dumai City Education Office, 2021). The sample taken from these participants used the Slovin formula to determine the number of representative samples, with the calculation results showing a sample size of 170 teachers. The sampling method used was purposive sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers select samples based on characteristics that are in accordance with the research objectives.

Data collection and analysis

This study uses instruments that are very important in data collection, which must be valid and reliable (Taherdoost, 2016). The instruments used were questionnaires and documentation, which served to measure teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy in English language learning activities. The questionnaire was developed by referring to various indicators covering various aspects of digital literacy, such as understanding the definition and needs of media and information, technical skills, and critical judgment.

Data collection was conducted by administering the questionnaire to teachers through Google Form as conducted by Janah & Cahyono (2022) and Sarwendah et al., (2023), followed by analyzing the results using a Likert scale to determine teachers' perceptions. In addition, documentation was also used to support the data through photos recording the observation and interview process. In data analysis, descriptive statistics through SPSS were used to calculate measures of data centering (mean, median, mode) as well as measures of dispersion (range, standard deviation). The data obtained was then categorized based on the average score to determine the level of teacher perceptions, whether high, medium or low with the guidelines in the table below:

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Table 1. Interpretation of Mean Score

No	Range	Category
1	3.50 – 5.00	High level
2	2.50 – 3.40	Medium level
3	1.00 – 2.40	Low level

(Saricoban & Oz, 2014)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the question of how high school teachers perceive the role of digital literacy in English language learning activities. This research is very important considering the increasingly crucial role of digital literacy in education today. The results of the research on English teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy are based on a questionnaire divided into eight sections, namely: definition and articulation needs of media and information, location and retrieval of information media, organization of media and information, knowledge creation, communication and ethics in using media and information, basic knowledge, technical skills, and critical judgment.

The urgency of this study lies in the effort to explore the extent to which teachers' understanding and ability to use digital literacy can improve the quality of learning. The researcher presented the data and descriptive statistics obtained, using the mean and standard deviation to calculate teachers' scores on each statement scale. Thus, this study focuses on the importance of digital literacy in supporting the effectiveness of English language learning, which will be answered through the data obtained from the questionnaire based on the items mentioned. The data presentation is then presented in the following table:

Table 2. Descriptive Quantitative Results

N	valid	170
	Missing	0
Mean		3.86
Median		4
Mode		4
Std. deviation		0.98
Range		
Min.		1
Max.		5
Sum.		1315

The findings in this study as presented in table 2 show that English language teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy in English language teaching (ELT) activities are generally at a high level. This is reflected in the teachers' total score of 1315, with a mode and median score of 4 each, indicating that most teachers gave a very positive assessment of digital literacy. The mean score of 3.86 also indicates teachers' very favorable perception of the

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importance of digital literacy in their teaching. In addition, the relatively low standard deviation of 0.98 indicates that teachers' views on digital literacy are fairly uniform, suggesting a consensus among them on the crucial role of technology in improving teaching quality.

These findings illustrate that overall, English teachers have a high understanding and awareness of the importance of digital literacy in education. They tend to regard digital technology as a valuable tool to improve teaching effectiveness, enrich teaching materials and provide greater access for students to learn independently. The characterization that emerges from the high scores and low standard deviations indicates a uniformity in teachers' views, which could be an indicator that the application of digital literacy in English teaching is well understood by the majority of teachers. This could also mean that the training or introduction of digital literacy in the context of English language teaching has been quite effective among these teachers. Overall, the findings provide a positive picture of teachers' readiness and attitude towards the integration of technology in learning, which in turn can support the development of students' digital skills in the context of English language learning.

Discussion

In this study, the authors highlight the importance of English teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy in the English learning process. Basically, the role of teachers has undergone a significant transformation. Previously, teachers were known as the main source of information, but as technology develops, teachers now function as facilitators, supervisors and evaluators in learning. This shows a fundamental change in the way learning is done, where the learning process is now mostly done online, utilizing various digital media.

Teachers' perceptions of digital literacy include a number of dimensions that are important for further understanding how teachers utilize technology in learning (Fang & Abdullah, 2024). These dimensions include definitions and needs related to digital media and information, the location and retrieval of media and information, how to organize media and information, communication that occurs in the context of using digital media, ethics in using such media, basic knowledge of technology, technical skills required, and the ability to make critical assessments of information found. All these aspects provide a more comprehensive picture of how teachers see and use digital media in English language teaching.

Digital media, in this context, has a very vital role in improving learning effectiveness. By using this media, Lamb & Arisand (2020); Noor et al., (2022) & Ramadansur et al., 2023) discovered that students' attention and interest can be more easily attracted, while stimulating their thoughts and feelings, which ultimately has a positive impact on achieving learning objectives. Digital media not only functions as a messaging tool, but can also act as a means to visualize learning materials. This makes it easier for teachers to convey information in a more interesting and creative way. The use of online media allows teachers to find more varied ideas and learning methods, so that the teaching and learning process becomes more dynamic and fun (Argudo-Serrano et al., 2023).

Various online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and other applications are now widely utilized by teachers to deliver learning materials. Liu et al., (2020) state that the use of these platforms allows classes that were previously limited to physical spaces to be conducted flexibly in online spaces. Teachers can also access a wider range of learning resources and deliver materials in a more interactive way, so that students can participate more actively and gain more effective learning (Özbek & Ergül, 2021). Thus, digital literacy becomes very important in supporting the success of English learning process in this digital era.

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Next, there are some ethical challenges that arise from the use of digital media, especially related to cyberbullying and copyright issues. Similar to Ayu & Rizky (2023) and Kraus et al., (2021), While digital media offers many benefits, such as easy access to information and communication, there are risks to be faced, including the negative impacts that can arise from unethical online behavior. Cyberbullying, for example, can occur when someone is bullied online, which has a negative impact on mental and emotional health (Twenge, 2019). In addition, copyright issues also frequently arise, where digital content is often used without the permission of the original creator, which violates the law and intellectual property rights.

On the other hand, students are often not well prepared to deal with these issues. They may not be aware of the potential dangers that can arise from the use of digital technology or have not had sufficient understanding of ethics in cyberspace (Peng & Chen, 2024). Teachers, as facilitators in the learning process, also face challenges in managing the devices that students bring to school. Each student has a different level of skill in using these devices, which can be an obstacle for them to utilize technology to its full potential. Teachers are expected to not only teach academic materials, but also provide guidance on the responsible use of digital media (Abdillah & Sueb, 2022). Therefore, it is important for teachers to equip students with knowledge and skills regarding the ethical use of digital media. By doing so, students will be better prepared to avoid negative impacts, such as getting caught up in cyberbullying behavior or violating copyright. This includes understanding how to use technology safely and wisely, as well as how to interact with others positively online (Kim & Ho, 2018).

Furthermore, digital literacy is seen as an ability that includes information, skills and applications related to digital systems (Pangrazio et al., 2020). According to Alamsyah & Sagama (2024), digital literacy involves linguistic skills to understand text, semiotics to interpret symbols and signs in digital media, and communicative and socio-cultural skills to interact with others in a digital context. The ability to evaluate digital content, produce relevant and creative content, and use technology wisely are part of digital literacy that must be mastered by every individual, especially students. Therefore, it is important to introduce educational programs that develop these skills. Such programs not only teach how to use technology but also encourage students to think critically and creatively and understand the social and cultural implications of using digital media (Ramadansur et al., 2023).

A weakness in teachers' perceptions of digital literacy can be found in the views of some teachers who prefer face-to-face learning. Putra (2021) defines that face-to-face learning is considered an easier and more familiar method because teachers and students can interact directly in the teaching and learning process. In face-to-face learning, teachers find it easier to deliver material in a more personalized and direct way, and can immediately see students' reactions to the material provided. This makes teachers feel more confident and comfortable in managing the class (Alamsyah & Sagama, 2024). Meanwhile, online learning is considered more complicated because it requires additional skills and understanding in using technology. Teachers have to master various learning applications and methods to optimize interaction with students, which can be a challenge for those who are not familiar with the use of technology.

In addition, students also often face difficulties in understanding learning materials in online classes. Similar to Bereczki & Kárpáti (2021), some problems that often arise are limited access to technology, such as unstable internet networks or inadequate devices, which hinder their learning process. In addition, students who are used to face-to-face learning often find it

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difficult to adapt to a more independent way of learning and the lack of direct interaction with the teacher. As discovered by Bartolomé et al., (2018), the inability to understand the material well will affect students' motivation to learn. Low motivation can lead to students not completing assignments well or even ignoring assignments given by the teacher. This is certainly a serious problem in the implementation of online learning, which should be able to provide a more flexible and accessible learning experience at any time.

On the other hand, despite the challenges faced, the strength of teachers' perceptions of digital literacy lies in their positive response to the ease of communication provided by technology (Hollister et al., 2022; Lamb & Arisandy, 2020; R. W. P. Putra, 2021). Colomar & Menn (2024) define that the apps such as Google Classroom, Google Form and Zoom are very helpful for teachers in maintaining communication links with students. By using these apps, teachers can still deliver materials, give assignments, and communicate with students even if there is no face-to-face meeting. This is a big advantage for online learning, as it allows faster and more efficient communication without being hindered by distance or time. Teachers can also give feedback faster, monitor students' progress, and ensure that the material taught is well understood (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2022). If teachers can overcome these barriers and utilize technology well, then digital literacy can have a very positive impact on the development of learning in the classroom, both in terms of communication, collaboration and management of learning materials.

This study shows that digital literacy has a very significant role in improving the quality of English language learning. Although there are challenges related to the ethical use of digital media and students' difficulties in following online learning, teachers' positive perceptions show the great potential of using digital media in optimizing learning. Therefore, better training and preparation for teachers and students in terms of digital skills and the ethics of their use are necessary to maximize the benefits of digital literacy in education.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, English teachers' perceptions of the role of digital literacy show a positive view. Digital literacy is considered as a tool that makes it easier for teachers to find questions and information through the internet. The main benefit of digital literacy is to assist teachers in obtaining information and media used in the learning process. This teacher perception can be seen through eight indicators, namely understanding and articulating media and information needs, locating and retrieving media information, organizing media and information, communication and ethics in using media and information, basic knowledge, and technical skills.

Furthermore, teachers are expected to continue developing their knowledge and skills in using digital technology, while schools need to provide training and supportive facilities so that teachers can utilize digital literacy effectively. With this collaboration, it is expected that the learning process will become more innovative and efficient, and improve the quality of teaching in accordance with current technological developments. Future research is also recommended to expand the number of samples used, including in districts or remote areas that also implement digital literacy.

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