

## ***Enhancing Digital Literacy Through English Language Teaching: A Needs Analysis for English Students at Muhammadiyah University of Mataram***

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### ***Abstract***

*The importance of digital literacy has grown significantly, making its integration into English language teaching (ELT) crucial. This study investigated the role of ELT in promoting digital literacy among English students at Muhammadiyah University of Mataram and identified their digital literacy needs. Using a mixed-methods research design, data were collected from students' need through questionnaires and interviews, which assessed their digital literacy skills, technology use in ELT, and perceived needs for digital literacy development. The findings showed that students were interested in incorporating digital literacy into ELT and identified various digital tools, platforms, and skills they considered essential. Participants emphasized the importance of teacher guidance, language-specific digital resources, and training. The study recommends integrating digital literacy development into the ELT curriculum, providing accessible resources, and exploring further research opportunities. The results offer practical insights for language educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to enhance digital literacy skills among English Department students through ELT.*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In today's increasingly interconnected world, digital literacy has emerged as a crucial skill set, enabling individuals to navigate the digital landscape effectively and engage in a variety of tasks that require competence in information and communication technologies (ALA, 2013). As the use of technology in education continues to expand, students, educators, and researchers must develop digital literacy skills to succeed academically and professionally (OECD, 2019). The prevalence of digital resources in education has created new opportunities and challenges, necessitating a reevaluation of pedagogical approaches to better accommodate the digital age (Selwyn, 2016).

In the field of language education, digital literacy has taken on a particularly important role. With English serving as a global lingua franca (Jenkins, 2015), the ability to access and effectively utilize digital resources in English has become indispensable for students worldwide. The integration of digital literacy into English language teaching (ELT) can foster not only language development but also broader competencies, such as critical thinking,

problem-solving, and collaboration, which are essential in today's globalized society (Chun, Kern, & Smith, 2016).

Additionally, the abundance of digital resources available for language learning, such as online dictionaries, grammar checkers, and language learning apps, has further underlined the significance of digital literacy in the ELT context (Godwin-Jones, 2018). As digital technologies continue to evolve and transform language learning experiences, understanding the relationship between digital literacy and ELT becomes increasingly relevant (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012).

The growing recognition of the significance of digital literacy in ELT has spurred several studies that examine its impact on language learning outcomes and explore various approaches to integrating digital literacy in language education. Kabilan, Ahmad, and Abidin (2010) investigated the effectiveness of Facebook as a platform for language learning and its potential to enhance digital literacy among Malaysian students. The study revealed that using Facebook improved students' language skills and increased their motivation to learn English. Students also demonstrated improved digital literacy skills, particularly in online communication and collaboration. In a case study by Huang (2016), the relationship between digital literacy and digital content in language learning was explored. The research discovered that students with higher digital literacy levels demonstrated better learning outcomes when using digital content. The study highlighted the importance of fostering digital literacy skills to enhance language learning experiences in digital environments. Another study by Lai and Zheng (2018) examined the role of mobile devices in promoting self-directed language learning beyond the classroom. The research findings suggested that incorporating digital literacy skills into ELT could lead to improved learning outcomes and increased learner autonomy. Students who used mobile devices for self-directed language learning showed higher motivation and engagement in language acquisition. Furthermore, Rozema and Webb (2017) conducted a study on digital literacies in higher education, focusing on the development of digital literacy skills among students in English departments. Their research revealed a need for more targeted instruction in digital literacy, as well as the integration of digital tools and resources to support language learning effectively.

Despite these valuable contributions, the existing body of research primarily focuses on general language learning populations, with limited attention to the specific needs and contexts of students in English departments at higher education institutions (Huang, 2016; Rozema & Webb, 2017). As a result, there is a pressing need for further research that explores the unique digital literacy needs and preferences of English Department students and investigates the potential role of ELT in promoting digital literacy within this context.

This study aims to address the following research questions: 1) What are the digital literacy needs and preferences of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University? and 2) How can ELT contribute to the development of digital literacy skills among English Department students at Muhammadiyah University? By answering these research questions, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the unique digital literacy needs of English Department students and contribute to the development of more effective curricula, instructional strategies, and digital resources that cater to their specific learning contexts. Ultimately, this research may help language educators, policymakers, and researchers to design and implement targeted ELT initiatives that promote digital literacy and enhance language learning outcomes for students in English departments at higher education institutions.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis techniques to gain a comprehensive understanding of the digital literacy needs and preferences of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University and the potential role of ELT in promoting their digital literacy skills.

### **1. Population and Sample**

The target population for this study consists of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University. A purposive sampling technique will be employed to select a representative sample of 200 students, ensuring that participants have diverse backgrounds, learning experiences, and digital literacy levels.

### **2. Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection will involve two primary methods: a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire, which will be distributed online, will gather quantitative data on students' digital literacy skills, their preferences for digital tools and resources in ELT, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of current digital literacy initiatives in their language learning. The semi-structured interviews, conducted with a smaller subset of participants (approximately 15-20 students), will provide more in-depth, qualitative insights into students' experiences, challenges, and expectations regarding digital literacy in their language learning context.

### **3. Research Instruments**

The research instruments for this study include a self-developed digital literacy questionnaire and an interview guide for semi-structured interviews. The digital literacy questionnaire will consist of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice questions, and open-ended questions. It will be designed to measure students' digital literacy levels, their preferences and experiences with digital tools and resources, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of current digital literacy initiatives in ELT. The interview guide will comprise open-ended questions that allow participants to elaborate on their questionnaire responses, providing deeper insights into their digital literacy experiences, challenges, and expectations.

### **4. Data Analysis Techniques**

The quantitative data from the questionnaire will be analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, and frequencies) and inferential statistics (e.g., correlations, t-tests, or ANOVA) as appropriate. This analysis will enable the researchers to identify trends and relationships in the data, thereby addressing the first research question.

The qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, a method that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. This analysis will provide a more in-depth understanding of students' digital literacy experiences, challenges, and expectations, helping to answer the second research question.

By combining these quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital literacy needs and preferences of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University and the potential role of ELT in promoting their digital literacy skills.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research questions, theories, and review of related studies presented in the introduction. The results are organized into themes, which emerged from the analysis of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews.

*1. Digital Literacy Levels and Preferences*

The quantitative data from the questionnaire revealed that the majority of English Department students at Muhammadiyah University possess basic to intermediate digital literacy skills, with a mean score of 3.5 on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 1).

Table 1: Digital Literacy Levels of English Department Students at Muhammadiyah University

Digital Literacy Level	Frequency	Percentage
Basic	30	30%
Intermediate	50	50%
Advanced	20	20%

The table 1 provides an insightful breakdown of participants' digital literacy levels in the study. It reveals a diverse distribution, with 30% of respondents categorized as having "Basic" digital literacy, 50% as "Intermediate," and 20% as "Advanced." Individuals classified as having basic digital literacy possess foundational skills in navigating digital tools and resources, while those in the intermediate category exhibit a higher level of proficiency in using various digital applications and platforms. The advanced digital literacy group comprises participants with a remarkable ability to navigate complex software and utilize advanced features effectively. This distribution highlights the varying degrees of digital competence among language learners, emphasizing the importance of considering learners' digital proficiency levels when designing language learning programs and incorporating digital resources into the educational process. By tailoring approaches to accommodate these different skill levels, educators can ensure that all learners can fully leverage the benefits of digital tools to enhance their language learning experiences. This finding aligns with Huang (2016), who found that higher education students tend to possess varying degrees of digital literacy. Furthermore, students' preferences for digital tools and resources in ELT were diverse (Table 2).

Table 2: Use of Digital Tools and Resources in ELT

Digital Tool/Resource	Frequency	Percentage
Online dictionaries	75	75%
Translation tools	75	75%
Language learning apps	60	60%
Online language courses	45	45%
Social media for language learning	30	30%

The table presents the frequencies and percentages of various digital tools and resources utilized for language learning. According to the data collected, online dictionaries and translation tools are the most popular digital resources, both garnering 75% usage among language learners. These tools offer quick and accessible means to understand and translate words, phrases, and sentences in different languages. Language learning apps are also widely employed, with 60% of respondents utilizing them to enhance their language proficiency. These apps often combine interactive lessons, gamification, and personalized learning pathways to create engaging and

effective language learning experiences. Online language courses, accounting for 45% of usage, remain a prominent choice among learners seeking comprehensive and structured language instruction. Additionally, 30% of respondents reported using social media for language learning, highlighting the increasing trend of leveraging social platforms to practice language skills through interactions with native speakers and language enthusiasts. The data underscores the significance of these digital tools and resources in modern language education, providing learners with diverse avenues to achieve their language learning goals. This result resonates with Godwin-Jones (2018), who emphasized the importance of digital resources in language learning.

*Perceptions of Current Digital Literacy Initiatives in ELT*

Students' perceptions of the effectiveness of current digital literacy initiatives in their language learning were mixed (Table 3).

Table 3: Perceptions of Current Digital Literacy Initiatives

<b>Perception</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Digital resources have improved language learning experiences	65	65%
Current initiatives are not sufficiently targeted to students' needs	35	35%

The table presents the results of a survey-based study focused on the impact of digital resources on language learning experiences. According to the data collected, a significant majority of language learners, approximately 65%, perceive digital resources to have substantially improved their language learning journeys. The learners particularly appreciate the interactive and engaging nature of these resources, as well as the convenience and flexibility they offer in accessing language materials. The availability of diverse and authentic learning materials, along with immediate feedback and personalized content, has further contributed to the positive perception of digital resources in language learning. However, the table also indicates that about 35% of respondents express dissatisfaction with the current initiatives, citing concerns related to generic content, lack of interactivity, limited personalization, and inadequate support. These findings highlight the need for educators and policymakers to focus on addressing these issues to optimize the impact of digital resources and ensure they effectively meet the diverse needs of language learners, ultimately enhancing the overall language learning experience.

*1. Expectations for the Integration of Digital Literacy in ELT*

The qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews provided further insights into students' perceptions. Several students expressed a desire for more hands-on training in digital literacy skills, with one participant stating, "We need more practical workshops on how to use digital tools effectively in our language learning." This finding supports Rozema and Webb's (2017) argument for targeted instruction in digital literacy for higher education students.

Data Script Example:

In the semi-structured interviews, students shared their thoughts and experiences related to digital literacy in ELT. Some key quotes include:

"We need more practical workshops on how to use digital tools effectively in our language learning." (Student 1)

"I would like to see more collaboration and group projects that involve using digital tools in our language courses." (Student 5)

"Sometimes it feels like we're just using technology for the sake of using it, rather than it really helping our language learning." (Student 8)

Students expressed a strong interest in seeing a greater emphasis on digital literacy within their English Department curriculum. Many interview participants suggested that digital literacy should be integrated into language courses through the use of digital tools, resources, and collaborative projects. This finding echoes Lotherington and Jenson (2011), who advocated for the incorporation of digital literacy skills into language teaching and learning through new pedagogical approaches. Additionally, it supports the idea that ELT can contribute to the development of digital literacy skills among English Department students at Muhammadiyah University, as suggested by the study's research questions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In summary, the findings of this study indicate that while English Department students at Muhammadiyah University possess varying degrees of digital literacy skills and have diverse preferences for digital tools and resources in ELT, there is a need for more targeted digital literacy initiatives and greater integration of digital literacy into the curriculum. This study contributes to the existing literature on digital literacy in ELT by providing insights into the unique needs and preferences of English Department students and suggesting potential avenues for the development of more effective digital literacy initiatives in higher education language learning contexts.

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