

**Digital Literacy Challenges Among English Education Students at
Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the specific issues related to digital literacy and the components that impact digital literacy faced by first-semester students majoring in English Education. This research uses qualitative methods. Findings from this study show that Socially Responsible is a component that has a higher impact on digital literacy, and constructive is a lower component that has an impact on digital literacy. So, it shows that socially responsible students are already aware of digital literacy, but constructive students are still confused about creating and sharing good digital content. Some of the digital problems found by first-semester students of the English education department are problems such as unclear sounds when studying online and internet connection problems, which hinder their understanding of the material being taught. Although students are aware of the benefits of digital technology, they face significant difficulties in using the internet, as well as challenges in the transition period from high school to university that uses more technology and there is a need for greater support from educational institutions to improve their digital literacy.

Keywords: Digital Literacy; English Education Students

INTRODUCTION

English education is crucial for Indonesian citizens, particularly in today's interconnected and globalized world. In the digital era, digital literacy has become an indispensable aspect of the English learning process. To effectively engage in modern society, individuals must possess a range of digital literacy skills, including the ability to use digital devices, navigate the internet wisely, and locate information efficiently.

Digital literacy encompasses a variety of competencies, such as processing information, interpreting messages, and communicating effectively with others. It is the ability to create, collaborate, and communicate within ethical boundaries

while understanding the specific digital skills required in today's technology-driven landscape. Mastering digital literacy enables individuals to use technology responsibly and safely, adapting to the rapid advancements in the digital world.

According to Koltay (2011), "Digital literacy is the awareness, attitude, and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze, and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others in the context of specific life situations, to enable constructive social action and to reflect upon this process." For students, digital literacy is particularly vital in the current digital age. It enhances academic performance, facilitates access to learning resources, and fosters communication and collaboration skills. However, during pre-observation, the researcher identified significant challenges in digital literacy among first-semester students. This transitional period from senior high school to university often reveals a gap in digital literacy practices, as the digital tools and expectations in secondary education differ markedly from those in higher education.

Moreover, the digital divide between students and educators presents additional challenges that hinder equitable learning opportunities. Bridging this divide by increasing access to technology and enhancing digital literacy for both students and educators is critical for empowering learners to navigate the digital landscape with confidence. This research aims to address these issues and serve as a valuable reference for integrating digital literacy into English language learning, ultimately contributing to improved academic outcomes and more effective digital engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital literacy has emerged as an essential skill in the digital era, particularly for students majoring in English education. It encompasses the ability to access, evaluate, and effectively use digital information, as well as to create and communicate ethically using digital technology (Koltay, 2011). These competencies not only enhance academic performance but also facilitate access to learning resources and improve communication and collaboration skills. However, the transition from high school to university often presents challenges, as students must adapt to a more technology-intensive learning environment.

This study identifies several issues associated with digital literacy. Students frequently encounter difficulties in accessing valid information and face technical challenges during online learning. Additionally, many students have limited skills in creating high-quality digital content. External barriers, such as poor internet connections and unclear audio on learning platforms, further hinder their ability to comprehend and engage with course materials. While students acknowledge the benefits of digital technology, these obstacles significantly impact their ability to adapt to technology-driven educational settings.

To analyze the factors influencing digital literacy, this study employs Douglas Belshaw's digital literacy framework, which identifies eight key components: Cultural, Cognitive, Constructive, Communicative, Confident, Creative, Critical, and Socially Responsible. Findings reveal that the Socially Responsible component has the highest impact, indicating that students are conscious of the ethical implications of digital technology usage. Conversely, the Constructive component, which involves the ability to create and share digital content effectively, scores lower. This suggests a need for targeted training programs to enhance students' constructive digital literacy skills.

The research underscores the critical role of institutional support in improving students' digital literacy. Implementing structured training programs, strengthening technology-based learning initiatives, and providing additional resources are pivotal in bridging the gap. By enhancing digital literacy, students can better harness the potential of digital technology, enabling them to improve their English learning experiences and adapt effectively to the demands of the digital age.

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the experiences, behaviors, and perceptions related to digital literacy issues in English education. According to Bogdan et al. (1975), qualitative methodology is a research procedure aimed at producing descriptive data in the form of written or oral words about people and observable behavior. This approach emphasizes understanding individuals and their backgrounds holistically. The study's informants consist of all first-semester students from the English education department. Twenty students will fill out questionnaires based on Douglas Belshaw's digital literacy framework, while six representatives will participate in structured interviews to provide more detailed insights.

Instrument and Procedures

Data collection for this study will involve triangulation, a technique that integrates multiple sources of information, including interviews, questionnaires, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2015: 83). Structured interviews will be conducted with first-semester English education students to gain in-depth insights into their digital literacy issues. The use of open-ended questions in these interviews will allow students to freely express their thoughts, experiences, and opinions. Additionally, questionnaires will be distributed to all first-semester students to identify the components impacting their digital literacy challenges. These questionnaires will be designed based on Douglas Belshaw's digital literacy framework to ensure relevance and depth. To further corroborate the findings from interviews and questionnaires, supplementary data will be collected through documentation. This

multifaceted approach aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the digital literacy issues faced by the students.

Data Analysis

The study will utilize a Likert Scale assessment to analyze data from the questionnaires, measuring students' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions regarding digital literacy issues. This scale is particularly valuable for understanding social attitudes and opinions. In qualitative research, the data analysis process is critical for identifying patterns, themes, and insights from collected data. By synthesizing information from questionnaires, interviews, and documentation, the research aims to generate a comprehensive understanding of the digital literacy challenges faced by first-semester English education students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study investigates the digital literacy challenges faced by first-semester English education students and the components that influence their digital literacy skills. Data was collected through interviews with six students and a questionnaire distributed to first-semester students at Muhammadiyah University of Sidenreng Rappang. The findings provide valuable insights into the students' experiences and perceptions of digital literacy in learning contexts.

Students encountered several challenges in adapting to digital-based learning systems. Regarding internet access, only one respondent experienced difficulties, while the remaining participants did not mention issues in this area. However, difficulties in identifying accurate information were more prevalent, with a majority of respondents struggling to distinguish valid information from fake news or unreliable sources. This challenge is particularly concerning in an environment where reliable information is crucial for academic success. Technical issues were also a significant barrier, with many participants reporting problems such as unclear audio and difficulty navigating online learning platforms. These technical challenges hinder their ability to engage fully with course content and reduce the overall effectiveness of digital learning experiences.

Despite these obstacles, all respondents acknowledged the benefits of digital literacy in learning English. They emphasized that digital literacy opens opportunities, enhances language skills, and supports more effective learning. Furthermore, many respondents noted that they often relied on peers or instructors for assistance in overcoming digital literacy challenges. This highlights the importance of peer and instructor support in a digital learning environment, where self-reliance alone may not be sufficient to address all issues.

The interviews revealed that transitioning from high school to a university environment, where technology plays a more central role, was a significant

adjustment for students. High school often had a more limited use of digital platforms, whereas university demands a greater reliance on tools such as SPADA and Zoom. This shift requires students to develop new skills and adapt to more complex digital systems, which can be overwhelming. Additionally, technical issues like poor internet connectivity, unclear communication tools, and difficulty managing abundant online resources pose substantial challenges to their learning process.

Another critical area of concern is the ability to evaluate and filter information online. Many students struggle to discern credible sources from misinformation, leading to potential confusion and unreliable information. This challenge is compounded by the overwhelming amount of information available, which makes it difficult to assess the relevance and accuracy of the content. Despite recognizing the importance of digital literacy, students expressed a need for additional support to navigate these challenges effectively.

The questionnaire results, analyzed using Douglas Belshaw's digital literacy framework, revealed varying levels of proficiency across the eight components. The Socially Responsible component achieved the highest score, reflecting strong student awareness of ethical considerations and the societal impact of digital technology. This indicates that students understand the importance of using digital tools in a way that respects privacy, intellectual property, and social norms. The Critical and Cultural components scored highly as well, showcasing the students' ability to critically assess information and engage with diverse cultural perspectives in online interactions. However, the Communicative component showed good proficiency, suggesting that students are adept at using digital communication tools effectively.

On the other hand, the Cognitive Ability and Responsible Self-Confidence components scored slightly lower, indicating a need for further development in accessing and evaluating online information, as well as demonstrating a responsible attitude towards digital behavior. The Creative and Constructive components scored the lowest, highlighting areas where students require more training in creating and sharing digital content. This indicates a gap in their ability to produce original, high-quality digital work, which is essential for academic tasks and personal development.

The findings underscore the dual reality faced by students: while they possess a good understanding of many aspects of digital literacy, significant challenges remain, particularly in adapting to new learning systems and managing online information effectively. The transition from a high school environment, where technology usage is relatively limited, to a university setting with extensive digital integration, represents a critical adjustment period. To bridge this gap, institutions should prioritize offering targeted training programs and workshops that focus on creativity and digital content development. Additionally, enhancing infrastructure, such as reliable internet access and user-friendly online platforms, will play a

crucial role in helping students navigate their digital learning journey. By addressing these issues, universities can equip students to fully harness the benefits of digital literacy, ensuring success in their academic and personal endeavors.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of data analysis and the discussion above about Digital Literacy Issues Faced by English Education Department Students in the First Semester, and Digital Literacy Components that Impact the Digital Literacy Faced by the First-Semester Students of the English Education Department, socially responsible are the components that have a higher impact on digital literacy and the constructive ones are the lower components that have an impact on digital literacy. So it shows that socially responsible students are already aware of digital literacy but constructively students are still confused about creating and sharing good digital content. Some digital issues found by the first-semester students English education department are such trouble like unclear sounds when learning online and internet connection problems, which hinder their understanding of the material taught. Although students are aware of the benefits of technology digital, they are facing significant difficulties in using the internet, as well as challenges in the transition period from high school to university which uses more technology and there is a need for greater support from educational institutions to improve their digital literacy.

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