



EXPLORING WAYS TO ENHANCE EFL STUDENTS' DIGITAL LITERACY IN EFL CLASSROOM

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Abstract

As technology becomes a more integrated part of current education, digital literacy is one aspect that teachers will need to develop in their students, alongside the use of technology. Therefore, teachers, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, need to find practical ways to develop and enhance their students' digital literacy ability successfully. To achieve that goal, the researcher analyzed fifteen articles published online from 2021 to 2025 using the Google Scholar database. The data results from the systematic literature review are categorized into five themes: (1) teachers design a customized reading lesson plan, (2) teachers are trained in digital literacy, (3) teachers strengthen students' digital competencies in reading, (4) teachers raise awareness about the importance of digital literacy, (5) teachers integrate technology to students' reading activities. The discussion of each theme is connected to the relevant literature. At the end, the study then provided suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, EFL, Reading Skill, Technology

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A. INTRODUCTION

Technology has become one of the things that influences people's lives, such as school, job, family, and even one's personal life, which means that it includes teachers. The use of technology has become more essential in today's education systems, especially when it comes to teaching languages (Vistari et al., 2025). Nowadays, teachers may have started to use technology in their teaching process, either while explaining the materials, giving assignments, or even in-class activities. Teachers started to utilize technologies during the pandemic due to the online learning situation and decided to continue to use them in their teaching even after onsite learning resumed (Moorhouse, 2023). When teachers involve technology in their teaching, it cannot be avoided that both teachers and students will be developing and improving a skill that is important alongside the usage of technology, which is digital literacy. Digital literacy is one's ability to use technology wisely and responsibly, so it will be helpful for oneself and others (Manubey et al., 2022). Through digital literacy, students and lecturers allow for more active and collaborative interaction (Ervianti et al., 2023). Digital literacy will continue to evolve in a communicative environment (Marín & Castañeda, 2023). This means that, in digital literacy, exchanging information will constantly happen and will keep progressing as long as communication is going on. Information literacy and digital literacy are intertwined. Whereas information literacy focuses on the information itself, digital literacy stresses the use of tools, such as e-books, learning videos, real-life simulations (e.g., information processing, problem-based), and online learning platforms (Deja et al., 2021; Soeprijanto et al., 2022).

Digital literacy is the capacity to use information and communication technology efficiently, sensibly, and critically to access, assess, produce, and share information in a variety of digital formats (Manubey et al., 2022). It is now essential to integrate digital literacy into the higher education curriculum to motivate students and improve their academic performance (Quraishi et al., 2024). Recent studies highlight the influence of digital literacy (Ervianti et al., 2023; Sanova et al., 2022; Soeprijanto et al., 2022) or teachers' perspectives and practices (Aydin & Erol, 2021; Gouseti et al., 2023; Prato & Solikhati, 2021). To add to the discussions in the literature, this study is proposed as a



guide for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers to develop instructional materials and assignments in reading classes that may develop and enhance students' digital literacy skills, or other skills that may be involved, specifically in the context of in their EFL reading classrooms. Digital literacy is not limited to technical know-how but includes cognitive, ethical, and social skills essential for navigating the complexities of the digital world, such as critically assessing information quality, collaborating online, and using new media like videos and simulations in learning (Ervianti et al., 2023).

In education, this skill is seen as crucial for empowering students to engage actively in digital environments, supporting not just academic achievement but also the development of communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. At the same time, digital literacy also refers to the ability to manage digital media and technology responsibly and effectively in learning and daily life (Manubey et al., 2022). It includes critical thinking to assess the credibility of information, the capacity to use diverse media resources, and the ethical use of technology to support learning outcomes and communication (Pratolo & Solikhati, 2021). In education, fostering digital literacy is essential for preparing students to engage actively in online learning environments, collaborate with others, and develop higher-order thinking skills necessary for academic and professional success.

However, some problems may occur when EFL teachers try to develop students' digital literacy in the English reading classroom. One of the problems that teachers may face is the lack of facilities for students and teachers to support their use. One factor that may limit the teaching-learning process is the lack of facilities (Hardiana et al., 2023). Clearly, digital literacy uses digital technologies to help, while also needing teachers and students to know how to use technology effectively in education, which has become a big challenge for school stakeholders (Alakrash & Razak, 2021; Nguyen & Habók, 2023). Another challenge arises from the teachers' limited knowledge about maximizing the benefits of digital literacy in the reading classroom. This is why teachers need to be digitally experienced (Pratolo & Solikhati, 2021). All of the ideas above suggest that for students to be able to begin reading and writing in digital media, they require a set of functional and technical abilities. While also needing the support of the teachers. This



means that teachers also need to have those skills needed to be able to understand technology. These skills include utilizing technology, accessing a broader range of materials, and utilizing online learning platforms.

Therefore, to address these challenges, EFL teachers need to know ways to develop, even enhance, students' digital literacy skills in their reading class. In this study, the researcher is interested in exploring the literature and is aiming to conduct a systematic review to answer the following research question: How can EFL teachers develop their students' digital literacy in their EFL reading classes? Answers to the research question above will benefit EFL teachers in keeping up with technology and utilizing it in their teaching, especially in the reading and integrating digital literacy context. This study might also be beneficial for teachers to reduce the confusion and issues caused by integrating digital literacy in the EFL reading classroom and to act as a practical guide for teachers. Thus, as explained in the previous paragraph, this study intends to serve as a guide for teachers to build their strategies for enhancing their students' digital literacy skills through reading materials and assignments. There are many studies that have already examined and talked about digital literacy in general, but few focus specifically on the EFL reading classroom. Prior research focuses more on exploring perspectives of both teachers and students, but not on practical strategies for teachers who teach reading. This study also gives an understanding of both educators and learners about the importance of digital literacy in education, especially in this modern world, where almost everything involves technology.

The researcher now proceeds with a brief literature review of this study, providing the definitions of a literature review. A literature review is a methodological approach to synthesizing existing research by collecting, evaluating, and integrating all relevant studies on a specific topic using transparent and replicable procedures (Refat et al., 2020). Unlike narrative reviews, which often rely on subjective judgment and selective citation, literature reviews follow a clearly defined protocol to minimize bias and ensure that the review process is comprehensive and scientifically rigorous (Linnenluecke et al., 2019). This includes searching from multiple databases, screening articles for eligibility, assessing the quality of the included studies, and synthesizing the



results (Mali, 2025a; Shaheen et al., 2023). Literature reviews may help researchers in improving their understanding of certain topics and ease them in finding gaps in the reviewed studies and possible directions for future research (Kraus et al., 2022). The goal is to provide a balanced and objective summary of evidence to inform theory development and future research directions. Literature reviews are considered a gold standard in evidence synthesis due to their transparency, objectivity, and reproducibility (Uttley et al., 2023). The strength of the method lies in its methodological rigor, which involves applying strict and consistent steps during data collection and analysis, including detailed documentation of search strategies and selection processes, which allows other researchers to modify or update the findings. However, despite their methodological strengths, literature reviews can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. However, although considering the fact that this method can take a lot of time, rather than the others, the literature review remains the most reliable technique for creating thorough and objective evidence analyses (Smela et al., 2023).

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This study aims to explore how EFL teachers develop their students' digital literacy in the EFL reading classes. To achieve that goal, the researcher used a literature review method used by Degirmenci (2021); Mali (2025b) to review 15 published journal articles. Table 1 lists the articles for this literature review. The first step, the researcher selected the articles analyzed in this study. She collected the relevant articles by Google Scholar using the following keywords: "Digital literacy in reading classroom", "developing digital literacy", "digital literacy in teaching reading". After choosing the articles that are relevant to the criteria, she classified each journal under specified themes according to the study's findings.

The researcher used an inductive analysis approach to analyze the articles for the discussion. As stated by Thomas (2006), "The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis is likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives" (p. 238). The researcher allowed the emergence of meaningful themes without imposing any preconceived notions related to the research



question of this study. Practically speaking, the researcher reads all the information on the website carefully several times and prepares a Google Sheet to code and note any related information on each website that could answer the research questions. Then, the researcher identified any patterns and commonalities in her notes and categorized them as possible ways EFL teachers can develop digital literacy in their students. At last, the researcher then developed final themes to answer the research question.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The five themes listed below address the research questions: How can EFL teachers develop their students' digital literacy in EFL reading classes? Each theme will be discussed in light of the relevant literature.

Theme 1: Teachers design a customized reading lesson plan

Teachers need to design reading lesson plans that help them keep the materials on track according to the school-approved reading curriculum, while also providing opportunities to integrate digital literacy into the lessons in EFL reading classroom. Research by Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al. (2023) mentioned that including self-assessment in the learning process or even the lesson plan and syllabus does help to improve students' reading comprehension, which leads to enhancing their digital literacy ability. Other research by Bui (2022) also stated that one of the teachers' needs to integrate digital literacy is to improve the quality of reading lessons and create reading class materials. Through balancing students' and teachers' technological needs while also including traditional strategies in the lesson plan, teachers can develop more engaging, effective, and equitable learning experiences for their students (Zbar & Ali, 2024). From the statement, we can see the benefit teachers may get from developing their own lesson plans.

Theme 2: Teachers are trained in digital literacy

Before teachers enhance their students' digital literacy ability through the reading materials and lessons, they first need to understand it so they can fully integrate digital literacy into their classroom. Gutiérrez-Ángel et al. (2022) stated the need to invest



in a comprehensive digital literacy program for initial teacher training. This statement is supported by Soufghalem (2024) who stated that, “Teachers’ experiences indicate a need for ongoing professional development to maximize the benefits of technology in teaching practices” (p. 212). From these statements, we can see that the lack of teachers’ training and support may be the challenges teachers face in enhancing students’ digital literacy (Boonmoh & Sanmuang, 2024). Thus, teachers may need to enroll in digital literacy training before they teach their students about it.

Theme 3: Teachers strengthen students’ digital competencies in reading

Students need the ability to comprehend digital reading tasks that are offered to them. Thus, that is why students may need help to develop their digital competencies, especially from their teachers who are their formal educators. Silvhiany et al. (2021) found that students still lack online reading skills while they are already taught reading through printed text. Supporting this, Nguyen and Habók (2022) stated that the students who already have the competencies showed positive effects in their studies. These statements support the research by Aydin and Erol (2021), who mentioned that one challenge that may need to be given attention to is when both students and teachers cannot use their digital literacy ability to the fullest, as they do not have the competencies for it. From those statements, we can see that teachers may need to strengthen their students’ digital competencies in order to successfully enhance their digital literacy ability.

Theme 4: Teachers raise awareness about the importance of digital literacy

To make students willing and motivated to enhance their digital literacy skills in reading classes, teachers first need to make the students become self-aware of their own need for it and its importance in their lives. So do their parents, so that they will also be supported and provided outside of school. In order for students to be able to compete globally in this digital era, they need to acquire the ability of digital literacy, as it serves as an important skill (Murtadho et al., 2023; Sanova et al., 2022). For teachers, as Ahmed and Akyildiz (2022) stated, “Digital literacy is important in helping them become lifelong partners”. In addition, teachers need to be able to assess these resources and tools so that they can effectively implement them in their EFL reading classrooms, rather than just recognizing the importance of digital literacy in the context of significant technological



development (Ahmed & Akyildiz, 2022). From those statements, it can be seen as the reasons why teachers may need to raise awareness of the importance of digital literacy.

Theme 5: Teachers integrate technology into students' reading activities

As it means by digital, the use of technology in reading contexts by the teachers might be important during the reading class activities. The high level of digital technology use among EFL teachers and students provides solid evidence for how digital tools improve language teaching and learning (Alakrash & Razak, 2021). Research by Soufghalem (2024) found that, "technology, when effectively integrated into the classroom, significantly improves students' digital literacy skills, including their abilities in online research, digital communication, and information evaluation". One of the benefits of digital technology is its ability to meet students' needs (Razak et al., 2022).

Those statements above are supported by Hazaymeh (2021), who found that the use of technology acts as a better way to have a flexible and interactive learning experience, which is shown by the positive impact on both students. Students showed positive perceptions of using technology to efficiently learn English through various learning styles while actively engaging, showing responsibility for lifelong learning (Hazaymeh, 2021). Therefore, teachers may consider integrating technology in the classroom to support students' learning process while still improving their digital literacy.

Table 1 below shows the summary and details of the articles identified in this section. Including the research goals and contexts of the articles.

Table 1 *The articles reviewed in this study*

Author(s) and Year	Article Title	Journal	Research Goal	Contexts and Subjects
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Abdel-Al Ibrahim al. (2023)	Collaborative learning, scaffolding-based instruction, and self-assessment: impacts on intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension, motivation, and anxiety	Language Testing in Asia	To examine the impacts of collaborative learning (CL), scaffolding instruction, and self-assessment on reading anxiety, reading motivation, and reading comprehension of Iranian EFL learners	58 students was chosen to represent the study's sample subject out of a total of 71 participants of Iranian EFL learners
Ahmed and Akyildiz (2022)	Determining the role of digital literacy in EFL teaching concerning the views of Turkish EFL teachers	RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Araştırmaları Dergisi	To find out EFL in-service secondary school (SS) and high school (HS) teachers' views on the role of digital literacy in their EFL teaching; revealing the level of EFL teachers' digital literacy and its effects on their	18 Turkish EFL teachers



teaching, and understanding the facilities of the digital tools and challenges in EFL teachers' instructions

Alakrash and Razak (2021)	Technology-based language learning: Investigation of digital technology and digital literacy	Sustainability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To investigate the applications of digital technology and the level of digital literacy in learning and teaching English2. To measure the significant differences between EFL teachers and students in their usage of technology and digital literacies	150 students and 40 EFL teachers in an Arab international schools in Malaysia
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in English
classrooms

Aydin and Erol (2021) The views of Turkish language teachers on distance education and digital literacy during covid-19 pandemic

International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies

To determine and describe the views of Turkish teachers on distance education conducted on various platforms in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic

Middle school Turkish language teachers



<p>Boonmoh and Sanmuang (2024)</p>	<p>Challenges of ICT teachers in integrating digital literacy post-COVID-19 curriculum revisions in Thailand's English teacher education programs</p>	<p>International Journal of Education & Literacy Studies</p>	<p>1. To explore the changes experienced by ICT teachers when integrating digital literacy with student teachers in English teacher education programs after the pandemic. During COVID-19, online learning was mandatory, necessitating significant adjustments</p> <p>2. To investigate the challenges associated with these changes</p>	<p>Six teachers from six public universities with firsthand experience with the revised curriculum from 2021 to 2023</p>
<p>Bui (2022)</p>	<p>English teachers' integration of digital technologies in the classroom</p>	<p>International Journal of Educational Research Open</p>	<p>To advance understanding of digital technologies integration</p>	<p>20 empirical studies, drawn from peer-reviewed journals</p>



			among English teachers and the factors influencing this process
Gutiérrez-Ángel et al. (2022)	Digital literacy in the university setting: A literature review of empirical studies between 2010 and 2021	Frontiers in Psychology	To analyze the empirical evidence provided by international studies in the last eleven years, related to the digital literacy of university students, including those pursuing degrees related to the field of education
Hazaymeh (2021)	EFL students' perceptions of online distance learning for enhancing English language learning during	International Journal of Instruction	To investigate 60 undergraduate first-year EFL learners' perceptions of online distance learning during Covid-19 Pandemic for empowering



	Covid-19 pandemic		them to achieve ISTE standards within EFL classroom
Murtadho et al. (2023)	The role of digital literacy in improving students' competence in digital era	Journal of Islamic Education Studies	To explore the role of digital literacy in enhancing students' competencies in the digital age
Nguyen and Habók (2022)	Digital literacy of EFL students: An empirical study in Vietnamese universities	Libri	To investigate the level of digital literacy of Vietnamese university students who are learning English
Razak et al. (2022)	Enhancing students' digital literacy at EFL classroom: Strategies of teachers and administrators	Cakrawala Pendidikan	To identify the strategies of EFL teachers and school administrators in promoting EFL students' digital literacies to thrive in the new
			6 EFL teachers and 6 school admins from the Arab international schools in Kuala Lumpur were gathered using a convenient sampling technique



normal
challenges

Sanova et al. (2022)	Digital literacy on the use of e-module towards students' self-directed learning on learning process and outcomes evaluation courses	JPI (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia)	To analyze the level of closeness of the relationship and see whether there is a simultaneous (together) and partial effect between digital literacy and students' self-directed learning	33 students who attended the Process Evaluation and Learning Outcomes Chemistry course
Silvhiany et al. (2021)	Critical digital literacy: students' ability to evaluate online sources	Indonesian EFL and Linguistics Journal of EFL	To investigate how students evaluated the credibility of online information and the bias that might have influenced the content of the information	152 students at a teacher preparation program in one of the state universities in Indonesia



Soufghalem (2024)	The role of International technology in enhancing digital literacy skills among secondary school students	1 Journal of Post Axial	To investigate the role of teachers from three technology in secondary schools enhancing digital literacy skills among secondary school students	20 students and 10
Zbar and Ali (2024)	Personalizing learning through technology in EFL context	Technology Assisted Language Education (TALE)	To explore how various technological tools and platforms can create individualized learning experiences for EFL students	Adaptive learning platforms (Duolingo, Rosetta Stone, Kahoot!, and Quizlet) users

Moreover, the articles in Table 1 were selected based on the following criteria. First, the paper can be research-based or literature-based, focusing on digital literacy in a reading context. The articles were published between 2021 and 2025 and have been cited over 10 times. It must be written in English and peer-reviewed. A detailed overview of the criteria is presented in Table 2 below. The researcher chose the time range for the published journal strictly from 2021 to 2025 to keep the references relevant to the topic and to keep up with the pace of how fast journal articles are being published each year. Therefore, researchers worldwide have taken on the responsibility of gathering, evaluating, and summarizing this expanding body of knowledge and publishing it in the form of literature reviews that are drafted using a variety of review types and



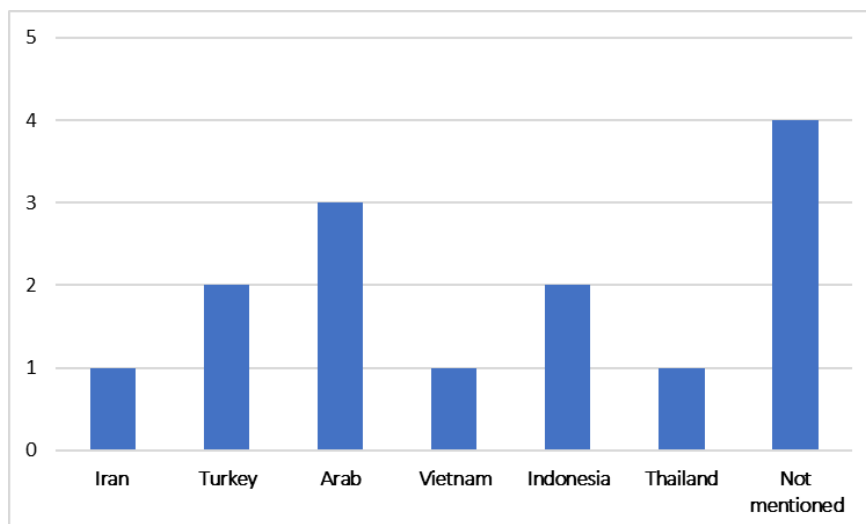
methodologies to stay up to date with the state-of-the-art in each domain and sub-domain (Mazher, 2025).

Table 2 *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Other
Document	Journal articles and books	Other
Article types	Peer-reviewed	Non-peer reviewed
Content	Digital literacy in reading	Other
Context of study	EFL	Other
Year of publication	2021-2025	Below 2021
Quality	Has been cited over 10 times	Has been cited less than 10 times

Meanwhile, Figure 1 shows the distributions of geographical contexts of the selected articles presented in Table 1.

Figure 1 *Distributions of the geographical contexts of the selected articles*



The figure above shows the geographical contexts of the selected articles written in Table 1, which are also relevant according to the criteria in Table 2. From the figure, it can be



seen that almost all of the articles are based on a study conducted in EFL countries, which shows the consistency of this research.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has informed several ways for EFL teachers to develop their students' digital literacy ability in the reading classroom. From the literature that has been reviewed, commonalities can be found as an answer to the research question. First, to help the teachers in track with the school curriculum, teachers can develop their own reading lesson plans or syllabus to include digital literacy in teaching reading in EFL reading classes. This is because the teachers are the one who knows their students' needs and what kind of lessons, materials, and assignments that are suitable with the students and applicable in their reading classrooms. Second, teachers need to have and understand the digital literacy skill first, while also being able to use the ability to the fullest. This is so that teachers can maximize their teaching of reading materials, which can be developed through enrolling in teacher training. Teacher training is also to ensure that the teachers are qualified and already have some background knowledge about digital literacy.

Third, as a start-up to develop the digital literacy skills, teachers can first strengthen the students' reading digital competencies, so it will be easier for the students to enhance their digital literacy skills throughout their reading as time goes by. This third approach needs to be addressed in order to prepare students first before jumping into materials or assignments that integrate digital literacy. Fourth, teachers raise awareness in the students about the importance of having digital literacy skills, so they may get motivated and become self-responsible in increasing their ability either in reading classes or in other activities that involve reading. This is to ensure that even outside the classroom, students still understand the need to enhance their digital literacy. Last, as said by 'digital', technology should be involved during the reading teaching-learning process (e.g. aids, materials, tasks, etc.) to make their learning more



effective, efficient, and engaging in order to support the teaching-learning process so the students will not get bored easily.

SUGGESTION

However, this research has some limitations that need to be addressed. This research only suggests ways for teachers to develop students' digital literacy, yet does not provide thorough challenges teachers and students might have when doing the suggestions. To address these limitations, future researchers can consider having a detailed analysis in each of the themes by reading more literature from both sides of the subject (teachers and students). Another recommendation regarding the data collection is to suggest future researchers to consider using a mixed methods design by having additional observations or interviewing EFL lecturers to give comments on or respond to the literature analysis results. It is also suggested that future researchers can search for geographically broader articles in databases other than Google Scholar to avoid algorithms influenced by certain locations.

Moreover, the researcher would like to offer some guiding questions for future researchers who wish to follow-up on the current research: What are the challenges EFL teachers might face during the process of developing students' digital literacy in their EFL reading classes? Among the five strategies revealed by this study, which way is more effective for developing EFL students' digital literacy? In closing, this study hopes to provide insights and practical ideas about how EFL teachers can develop their students' digital literacy in their EFL reading classes.



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