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English Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Literacy in Teaching

Imam Santosa
Universitas Esa Unggul, Indonesia

Stephanie F Caroline
SMA Bhakti Mulya 400, Indonesia

Ifan Iskandar
Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Vjollca Jonuzi
Universum College, Kosovo

*** Corresponding author:**
Imam Santosa, Universitas Esa Unggul, INDONESIA. ✉ imam.santosa@esaunggul.ac.id

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Abstract

Background of the Study: Digital literacy has become a crucial aspect of modern education. English teachers are expected to not only use digital tools but also understand their pedagogical and ethical implications.
Aims and Scope of the Paper: This study explores the perceptions of junior and senior high school English teachers regarding digital literacy in teaching, including their experiences, challenges, and readiness in integrating digital tools.
Methods: Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 17 English teachers who met the inclusion criteria. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes.
Results: The analysis revealed four main themes: access, evaluation, use, and reflection. Teachers showed enthusiasm in using digital tools, but practices remained within familiar boundaries. Formal training in evaluating content was limited, and concerns about ethical and pedagogical responsibilities emerged.
Conclusion: Effective integration of digital literacy requires not only access to tools and infrastructure but also continuous professional development that promotes confidence, critical awareness, and reflective teaching practices.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy has become a crucial competency for English teachers in 21st-century learning. The rapid integration of technology into education demands that teachers not only understand digital tools but also apply them pedagogically to enhance language instruction. English teachers, in particular, are expected to go beyond traditional literacy instruction and foster students' skills in digital collaboration, information evaluation, and multimodal communication (Mirzayeva, 2019). Research shows that teachers' beliefs about digital literacy across behavioral, normative, and control dimensions play a key role in how effectively they integrate technology into their classrooms (Hidayat, 2019). Furthermore, digital literacy is positively correlated with teachers' overall 21st-century skills proficiency, making it not just a supplementary skill but a foundation of modern teaching practice (Özer & Kuloğlu, 2017). However, challenges remain such as the lack of targeted training and discrepancies between teachers' self-perceptions and supervisors' evaluations highlighting the need for sustained professional development in this area.

The role of teachers in implementing digital technology in teaching and learning is increasingly multifaceted and central to modern education. Teachers are no longer just content deliverers; they are now facilitators, technology integrators, and learning consultants who must adapt to rapidly changing digital tools. Research shows that teachers act as key agents of change in the digital era, balancing innovation with ethical, pedagogical, and technical responsibilities (Fitria & Suminah, 2020). Their effectiveness often depends on their own digital competence and willingness to shift from traditional to student-centered teaching models. Studies also highlight how generational differences such as between digital natives and digital immigrants affect how teachers integrate

technology into classrooms, with younger teachers often more fluent in digital tools but all needing targeted professional development to ensure meaningful implementation (Rokhyati & Ramadhani, 2022). Furthermore, teachers play a vital role in supporting students' development of digital skills, requiring them to be knowledgeable not only in tools but also in promoting critical thinking and digital ethics. Ultimately, the teacher's role in digital education is dynamic and evolving, demanding continuous learning and institutional support (Azizi et al., 2024).

One emerging issue is that not all teachers share the same perceptions and readiness for digital integration. Studies consistently show wide variation in teachers' confidence, skill level, and willingness to integrate technology, influenced by factors such as age, teaching experience, access to resources, and prior training (Id et al., 2023). For instance, some teacher educators still question the pedagogical value of digital tools, while others embrace them enthusiastically, particularly younger or more digitally fluent instructors (Ngao et al., 2022). Pre-service teachers also show mixed readiness levels, with some reporting high ethical and collaborative readiness, but low practical competence in using advanced digital tools in real teaching contexts (Peled, 2021). Similarly, although many educators express positive attitudes toward using digital materials, actual integration in classrooms is often limited by technical barriers and insufficient training opportunities (Yustinus et al., 2023). These disparities suggest that promoting equitable and effective digital integration requires not only infrastructure but also differentiated, targeted professional development that respects the varying levels of teacher readiness.

A number of foundational studies have highlighted how differences in teacher perceptions and beliefs can become significant barriers to digital integration in education. Ertmer (1999) famously categorized these into *first-order barriers*, such as lack of access and support, and *second-order barriers*, which include personal beliefs, pedagogical values, and resistance to change. These second-order barriers are often more difficult to overcome because they are deeply rooted in teachers' professional identities and instructional habits (Ertmer, 2005). Further developments by Ertmer and colleagues identified additional "barrier thresholds" psychological tipping points where even motivated teachers struggle to move beyond familiar practices (Heath, 2017). Similarly, studies have shown that even when material and technical support is available, teachers' internal value systems and design thinking may still inhibit meaningful technology use in the classroom (Tsai & Chai, 2012). Kessler's work also emphasized that teachers' confidence and perceived competence significantly influence how actively they use digital tools for communication and instruction, especially in language learning contexts (Kessler, 2018). Together, these studies underscore that addressing digital integration requires more than equipment or mandates it requires belief change, confidence building, and pedagogical reorientation.

Despite the growing significance of digital literacy in 21st-century education, English teachers' perceptions and readiness to integrate it into teaching remain varied and inconsistent. While some educators recognize digital literacy as essential for modern language instruction, others feel less confident or lack the competence to implement it effectively. This inconsistency raises important questions about how English teachers perceive digital literacy, what factors influence those perceptions, and how such beliefs shape their teaching practices (Herdina & Ningrum 2023; Hakim & Suendarti, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to explore English teachers' perceptions of digital literacy in teaching, identify key factors such as teaching experience and institutional support that shape those views, and examine how their perceptions influence classroom practices. It also seeks to uncover the challenges and conditions that either hinder or enable the integration of digital literacy into English language teaching Hidayat (2019). By doing so, the research contributes to the field of English language education by offering insight into teacher readiness and perspectives, which are often overlooked in favor of student-centered research. It also provides evidence-based recommendations for teacher training programs and institutional policies aimed at promoting more effective and equitable integration of digital literacy in English classrooms (Zakia & Yana, 2023).

METHOD

Research Design:

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the perceptions of English teachers regarding digital literacy in language teaching. A qualitative approach is appropriate for capturing the complexity of beliefs, professional experiences, and teaching practices, especially within the context of educational change involving digital technologies. This design enables researchers to interpret how teachers understand, apply, and reflect on digital literacy in diverse classroom contexts.

Participant:
Participants in this study consist of 17 English teachers from junior and senior high schools (SMP and SMA) in Indonesia. All participants were actively teaching English and had experience using digital platforms in instructional activities.

Population and the Methods of Sampling:
A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who met specific inclusion criteria

1. having at least two years of English teaching experience
2. Current use of digital platforms in their classroom teaching (such as Google Classroom, Zoom, or other learning management systems)
3. Willingness to participate in in-depth interviews. These criteria ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to digital teaching environments and were capable of reflecting meaningfully on their practices.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure:
Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview protocol that aimed to explore teachers' experiences, attitudes, and practices in integrating digital literacy. The questions were developed based on four widely recognized indicators of digital literacy: access (the ability to find and use digital tools), evaluation (the ability to assess the credibility and relevance of digital content), use (the application of digital tools for instructional purposes), and reflection (critical thinking about the ethical, pedagogical, and personal implications of digital technology). These indicators were adapted from established frameworks and similar studies Zuhri et al., (2024); Ajani (2024). Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes, was conducted with prior consent, recorded, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness:
Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview transcripts, following the six-phase model proposed familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. To enhance credibility and trustworthiness, source triangulation was applied by comparing responses across teachers from different types of schools (public and private). Member checking was also conducted by returning interview summaries to participants to confirm accuracy and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result:

1.1 Access: Perceptions of Availability and Readiness

Teachers' perceptions of digital access were far from uniform. Their sense of readiness was strongly shaped by differences in infrastructure, institutional support, and personal resourcefulness. A recurring issue in the interviews was reliance on personal devices and connections due to institutional gaps. For example, one teacher explained, *"I often have to use my personal phone because the school doesn't provide a dedicated laptop for teaching. Sometimes the Wi-Fi doesn't even reach my classroom."* This was not an isolated case; several participants noted they used mobile hotspots at their own expense when school connectivity failed. Another teacher, from a suburban junior high school, reported: *"I have my own laptop and pay for internet at home, but when I teach at school, the projector sometimes doesn't work and the connection is unstable. I have to simplify my materials just in*

case." This illustrates a pattern where personal preparedness is counterbalanced by institutional unreliability, creating anxiety about planning and delivery.

Beyond infrastructure, teachers commented on the lack of policy and leadership at the school level to support digital pedagogy. One respondent said, *"The school pushed us to use an LMS during COVID, but once we returned to in-person learning, everything stopped. There's no training, no follow-up."* Another stated bluntly: *"Technology use is not monitored or evaluated. It's optional. If you want to do it, fine. If not, no one notices."* These responses suggest that digital initiatives were often seen as temporary, reactive measures, not embedded practices with long-term planning.

Teachers were also aware of wider structural inequalities in access. Multiple participants compared their schools with others in wealthier or urban areas. As one put it, *"It's hard to compete with schools in Jakarta. They have smartboards, faster Wi-Fi, and students who already have laptops. We're not on the same playing field."* Another teacher in a rural district said, *"We only have one projector for the whole English department. Meanwhile, schools in the city get tablets and grants."*

Such comments reflect a keen awareness among teachers that digital access is not just about hardware it's about equity, expectations, and educational justice. The digital divide, as experienced by these educators, intersects with existing socioeconomic disparities and limits the potential of technology to transform language learning across diverse contexts. In the Figure 1 shows the relative prevalence of three key sub-themes based on coded interview responses: personal access (40%), institutional readiness (35%), and perceived inequality (25%)

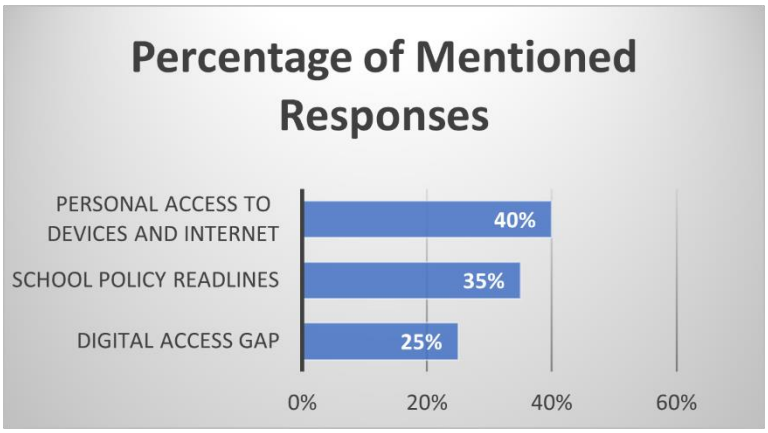

Figure 1. Teacher's Perceptions of Acccses to Digital Tools and Resources

1.2 Evaluation: Critical Awareness of Digital Content

Teachers' perceptions revealed a nuanced awareness of the need to critically assess digital materials, yet their strategies for doing so varied in depth, consistency, and formality. For many, the importance of evaluating digital content was seen as fundamental to maintaining instructional quality. One teacher explained, *"You can't just take anything from the internet and use it in class. I always check the credibility who published it, whether it's from an educational source, and if it matches our curriculum."* This response reflects a deliberate effort to verify both source and pedagogical alignment. Another teacher echoed this stance, stating, *"Sometimes students send me materials they find online, but I tell them to double-check. There's too much misinformation now, especially from YouTube and TikTok."* This concern about online disinformation was prevalent across interviews, particularly in relation to student use of informal learning content. Teachers felt a strong sense of responsibility to act as content gatekeepers.

However, while most teachers acknowledged the importance of evaluating digital content, their actual evaluation strategies tended to be informal and intuitive. Several described relying on experience or "gut feeling" rather than systematic criteria. One participant shared, *"I usually go with what feels right. If it's from a well-known website or has good visuals, I assume it's okay."* Another

admitted, *"Honestly, I don't always verify everything. Sometimes I just need something quick for class."* These statements reveal a tension between ideals and practice teachers want to uphold quality but are constrained by time and resources.

Many teachers also emphasized the importance of teaching students to evaluate digital sources, seeing it as a critical skill for lifelong learning. One respondent explained, *"I often tell my students: just because it's on the first page of Google doesn't mean it's true. We discuss how to check the author, the source, and the intention."* Another shared a classroom practice: *"I do comparison tasks two videos on the same topic, one reliable and one misleading and ask students to decide which one is better and why."*

Despite this awareness, teachers reported challenges in consistently applying evaluation practices, especially when dealing with non-textual digital media. A teacher noted, *"Videos are harder to judge than articles. They might be engaging, but we don't always know who made them or what the message really is."* Others pointed to the sheer volume of digital content as overwhelming. *"There's too much out there. Filtering takes time, and sometimes we just have to use what we can find quickly."* In the Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of themes across responses: emphasis on evaluating content (30%), informal strategies (25%), efforts to teach evaluation to students (25%), and challenges in practice (20%).

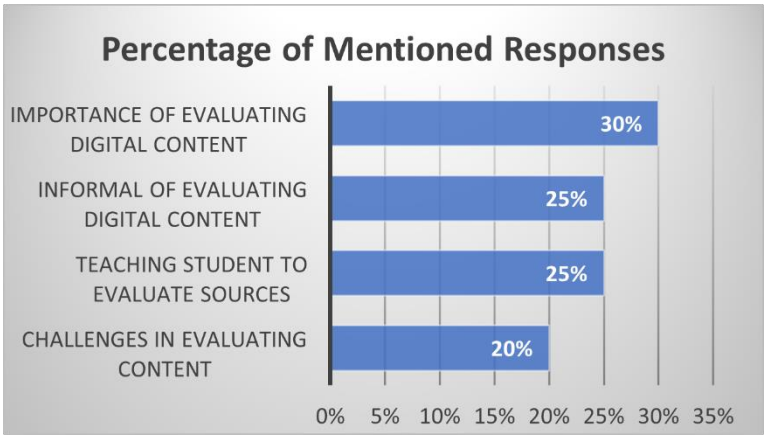

Figure 2. Teacher Perceptions on Evaluating Digital Content

1.3 Use: Perceived Function and Practical Challenges

Teachers largely viewed digital tools as valuable assets in English language teaching (ELT), but their actual use was mediated by familiarity, infrastructure, and time constraints. A consistent pattern emerged: while most teachers were optimistic about the role of technology in language education, its integration was often pragmatic and confined to platforms they knew well.

The perceived usefulness of digital tools was broadly affirmed. One teacher remarked, *"I think technology makes English learning more engaging. With videos and games, students pay more attention than when I just use the textbook."* Another emphasized its pedagogical value: *"Using online quizzes or interactive slides helps reinforce vocabulary in a fun way. Students are more motivated."* These comments highlight how teachers see digital tools not merely as accessories, but as integral to improving instructional delivery and learner participation.

Yet, when describing what tools they actually used, teachers consistently mentioned a small set of familiar platforms particularly YouTube, WhatsApp, Google Slides, and Quizizz. *"I always use YouTube to show native speakers talking in real situations,"* one teacher explained. Another said, *"WhatsApp is my go-to for communicating with students and sending reminders. It's simple and everyone uses it."* While these tools were embraced, more advanced systems like learning management systems (LMS), AI writing assistants, or collaborative authoring platforms were rarely used. Teachers cited limited training and lack of exposure as key reasons.

In addition, many teachers pointed to institutional and technical barriers that hampered more consistent or innovative use. A respondent noted, *"Sometimes I want to try using Padlet or an LMS, but I don't have time to learn it properly. Also, if the internet goes down in class, everything falls apart."* This reflects a broader pattern of tentative engagement: teachers are willing, even eager, but environmental constraints limit what's possible. Some teachers also questioned whether digital tools genuinely enhanced student learning, or simply made instruction more complicated. *"Yes, technology is attractive,"* one explained, *"but planning lessons with it takes more time, and if students just watch passively, they don't really learn better."* Another added, *"We often assume that students like technology, but some still prefer books and handwritten notes. We need to balance both."*

These observations reveal a subtle but important tension: digital tools are valued for their potential to enrich learning, yet the burden of implementation often falls heavily on teachers with minimal institutional support. In practice, this leads to a selective use of technology focused more on accessibility and convenience than on pedagogical innovation. In the Figure 3 show to visualizes teacher responses across four sub-themes: positive perceptions of usefulness (35%), reliance on familiar tools (30%), barriers to integration (20%), and concerns over complexity and student engagement (15%).

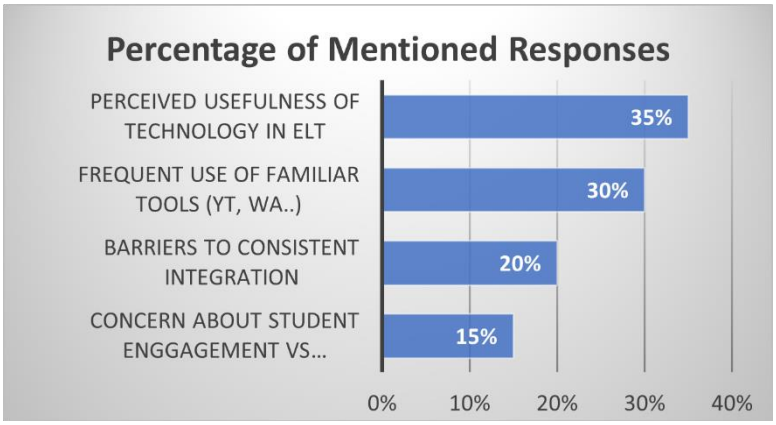

Figure 3. Teacher's Perceptions on the Use of Digital Tools in ELT

1.4 Reflection: Meaning, Ethics, and Pedagogical Identity

Teachers' reflections on the use of digital tools extended beyond practicalities into deeper considerations of how technology is reshaping their professional roles, classroom relationships, and ethical responsibilities. While their views varied, most demonstrated a critical awareness of the broader implications of technology in English language teaching (ELT).

A recurring insight was that teachers no longer see themselves solely as knowledge providers, but increasingly as facilitators in a digitally mediated learning environment. One participant described this shift succinctly: *"Students can find everything on their phones now. My role is more about guiding, clarifying, and helping them make sense of what they find."* Another echoed this idea, saying, *"I feel less like a lecturer and more like a mentor. Technology has made that change inevitable."* These statements suggest that digital access has altered the perceived authority and function of teachers in the classroom. In parallel, teachers expressed mixed feelings about how technology has affected their relationships with students. On one hand, they appreciated the ease of communication and increased opportunities for interaction through tools like WhatsApp and Google Classroom. *"Now I can check in with students anytime, not just during school hours,"* one teacher said. However, others voiced concern that technology also introduced emotional distance and reduced face-to-face engagement. A teacher noted, *"I used to know my students better. Now they send in work online, and we don't talk as much in class."* This ambivalence reflects the shifting dynamics of relational pedagogy in digital contexts.

Teachers were also deeply concerned with ethical issues surrounding technology use, especially as it relates to academic honesty and overdependence on automation. Several raised the issue of

students using AI tools like ChatGPT or translation apps without fully understanding the material. *"They copy from Google Translate or now ChatGPT,"* one said, *"but they don't learn anything. It's faster, yes but it's shallow."* Another teacher added, *"I worry students are losing their critical thinking. They just want instant answers."* These remarks highlight a growing tension between convenience and deep learning.

At the same time, many teachers articulated a strong desire to see ethics and critical thinking become central to digital pedagogy. One respondent urged, *"We need to teach not just how to use the tools, but how to use them wisely and responsibly."* Another emphasized the importance of values: *"Technology should help students think, not just finish tasks faster. That means we must embed digital ethics into our teaching."* These responses suggest that teachers are not passive adopters of technology they actively negotiate its meaning and impact in relation to their pedagogical values. In the figure 4 show to Summarizes the key sub-themes: changing teacher roles (30%), teacher–student relationship shifts (25%), ethical concerns (25%), and aspirations for more critical, value-based digital pedagogy (20%).

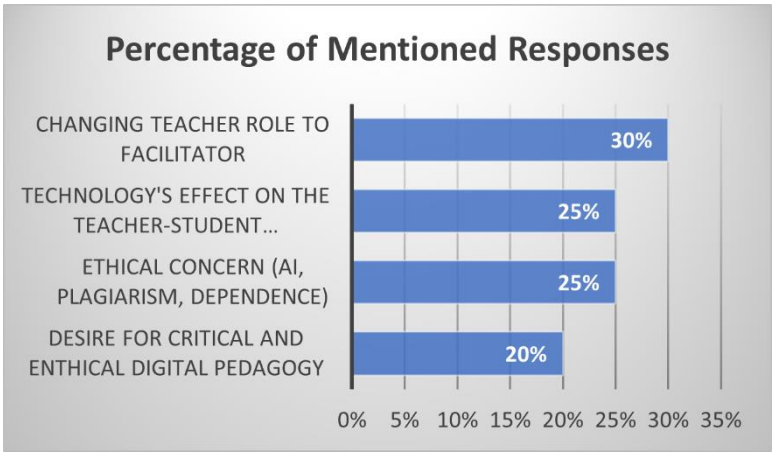

Figure 4. Teacher's Reflections on the Broader Impact of Technology in ELT

The findings of this study reveal that English language teachers perceive digital literacy as a multifaceted and context-dependent aspect of their professional practice. While most teachers acknowledge the value of digital tools in enhancing engagement and access to language learning, their ability to integrate technology effectively is shaped by varying levels of access, informal approaches to evaluating content, reliance on familiar platforms, and limited institutional support. Teachers reported both enthusiasm for using technology and frustration with infrastructural and policy constraints. Their reflections also highlighted shifts in professional identity, ethical concerns related to student dependence on AI tools, and a strong desire for critical, value-based digital pedagogy. Overall, these findings suggest that digital literacy in ELT must be supported not only through training and access but also through frameworks that promote critical thinking, ethical use, and equitable participation in digital education.

Discussion:

The findings of this study offer critical insights into how English language teachers perceive and navigate digital literacy within diverse school settings. As digital tools become increasingly integral to educational practices, it is essential to understand how teachers conceptualize and apply digital literacy in their instructional contexts. This study aimed to investigate junior and senior high school English teachers' perceptions of digital literacy, focusing on how they engage with key dimensions such as access to digital tools, information evaluation, pedagogical use, and reflective practices. These findings are particularly significant in light of established digital literacy frameworks, which offer a theoretical lens for interpreting teachers' experiences.

In one of the earliest definitions of digital literacy, emphasized that it extends beyond technical proficiency to include the ability to critically evaluate and synthesize information from digital

sources (Pool, 1997). This perspective is echoed in the current study, where teachers consistently highlighted challenges not in using tools, but in guiding students to assess online content credibly. Similarly, Nag (2012) proposed a multidimensional view of digital literacy comprising technical, cognitive, and socio-emotional aspects. These dimensions were reflected in teachers' varying levels of comfort and capability while many showed confidence in using digital platforms for instruction, some expressed uncertainty about addressing students' online behavior or evaluating digital content effectively. English teacher trainees struggled to integrate digital tools meaningfully into communicative and linguistic goals, highlighting the ongoing tension between pedagogical goals and digital fluency.

Additionally, findings from Mirra (2019) suggest that English teachers benefit most when digital literacy is framed through the lens of connected learning, emphasizing relevance, collaboration, and critical thinking. This study's results confirm that when teachers perceive digital tools as extensions of student interests and social learning spaces, they are more likely to integrate them purposefully. Thus, by aligning this study's findings with theoretical models from Gilster and Ng, it becomes clear that English teachers' engagement with digital literacy is both nuanced and shaped by their ability to interpret digital practices through pedagogical, cognitive, and social lenses.

A key theme emerging from the study is the variation in teachers' digital access, which highlights persistent structural inequities across school settings. Some participants reported consistent access to reliable internet and updated devices, while others relied on unstable connections or outdated equipment. These differences mirror the broader digital divide observed in educational research, where infrastructural gaps shape the feasibility of implementing technology-enhanced learning strategies (Howard et al., 2021). The issue of access is not merely logistical it directly impacts how digital literacy is enacted in the classroom. This aligns with Ertmer's (1999) conceptualization of first-order barriers, which include access to hardware, connectivity, and institutional support. When such barriers persist, even highly motivated and digitally literate teachers may struggle to deliver effective digital instruction.

However, the findings also reveal teachers' resilience and agency in responding to these structural constraints. Many educators reported using their personal smartphones, laptops, or data plans to maintain digital learning, especially during remote teaching periods. While this demonstrates commendable dedication, it also raises concerns about the sustainability of such self-funded solutions. These coping mechanisms, while necessary in the short term, risk reinforcing inequalities between teachers anfd schools with differing levels of support. This insight complements earlier findings by Soifah et al. (2021), which showed that even in well-equipped schools, teachers often bear the burden of resolving technical limitations through personal initiative.
The implication is clear: institutional investment in digital infrastructure is not optional it is a prerequisite for equitable and sustainable digital literacy integration. Without systemic support, the responsibility for bridging digital gaps unfairly shifts to individual educators, undermining efforts to implement inclusive digital pedagogy. As affirmed by recent research, comprehensive support from educational authorities is essential to move beyond access disparities and enable meaningful digital innovation in the classroom.

Another central finding of this study is that while teachers widely recognize the importance of evaluating digital content, most rely on informal and intuitive strategies rather than formal frameworks to assess online information. Participants frequently mentioned "common sense" checks, personal judgment, or cross-referencing with familiar sources when selecting materials for their lessons. This reflects a general awareness of digital criticality, but it also signals a gap in structured pedagogical approaches. These findings resonate with Livingstone's (2004) view that although many educators and students participate in digital environments, they often lack media literacy skills necessary to critically evaluate content, navigate bias, or assess credibility. Similarly, Kessler (2018) emphasized that English language teachers, while increasingly integrating technology, rarely receive targeted training in critical digital literacy, leading to limited classroom modeling of evaluative practices.

This study adds a new layer to existing research by revealing that teachers' informal evaluation habits though well-intentioned often lack pedagogical transparency. Few teachers could articulate specific criteria for determining content credibility or explain how they teach students to evaluate information independently. As a result, students may observe digital tools being used, but without explicit instruction in critical engagement, they are left without the skills to navigate digital information themselves. This reflects a pedagogical gap not only in the training teachers receive, but also in the opportunities they provide for students to develop evaluative digital skills (Anh et al., 2024).

The implication is that professional development must go beyond basic digital tool training and instead focus on critical digital literacy including how to identify misinformation, teach source credibility, and integrate evaluative thinking into lesson planning. Without this shift, digital literacy in schools risks remaining surface-level, reinforcing usage without fostering true digital discernment among both teachers and learners. The study reveals a clear pattern in teachers' use of digital technology: while they are generally enthusiastic and willing to incorporate digital tools, their use often remains pragmatic and confined to familiar applications. Most teachers reported using basic functions of tools like PowerPoint, Google Classroom, or WhatsApp, primarily to distribute materials, assign tasks, and manage communication. This pragmatic approach suggests that digital tools are being used more to replicate traditional pedagogical practices such as delivering lectures or managing homework rather than to transform how teaching and learning occur. This observation aligns with Ertmer's (1999) concept of second-order barriers, which relate not to access or infrastructure, but to teachers' attitudes, confidence, and underlying pedagogical beliefs. When teachers view technology as an add-on rather than a medium for rethinking instruction, its impact remains limited (Ertmer, 2005). This study adds nuance to Ertmer's framework by showing that even teachers who are digitally literate and open to experimentation often stop short of pedagogical innovation. Instead of using technology to foster student agency, collaboration, or creativity, it is typically integrated in ways that mirror textbook-based instruction. The underlying issue is not unwillingness but a lack of scaffolding and support to help teachers explore new methods of teaching that align with the full potential of digital pedagogy.

To bridge this gap, innovation in English language teaching (ELT) must be supported through ongoing, context-sensitive professional development, peer collaboration, and mentoring structures that allow teachers to move beyond comfort zones. As shown by studies on teacher digital transformation, meaningful change is most likely when educators are part of reflective communities of practice and receive training that ties digital tools directly to learner-centered pedagogical outcomes. Without these supports, technology use in ELT may remain superficial, failing to fulfill its potential as a transformative force in language education. A final but significant theme from this study is the growing critical awareness among teachers of how digital tools are reshaping their professional identities, classroom relationships, and ethical responsibilities. Participants expressed concern not only about how to use digital platforms effectively, but also about the implications of that use particularly in relation to student engagement, dependence on automation, and academic integrity. Many teachers reflected on the challenges posed by plagiarism, the increasing reliance on AI-generated content, and the risk of digital tools distancing them from students' authentic learning processes. Digital engagement requires teachers to redefine their roles and identities, transitioning from knowledge transmitters to facilitators, curators, and ethical decision-makers in complex digital landscapes. Similarly, Aithal (2025) emphasized the need to confront the political and ethical dimensions of educational technology, cautioning against uncritical adoption and advocating for more reflective digital pedagogy.

Research Contribution:
This study contributes a fresh insight by showing that teachers are increasingly calling for digital literacy to be understood not just as a technical skillset, but as a value-driven professional practice. Participants highlighted the importance of modeling ethical behavior online, managing student data responsibly, and fostering critical conversations about AI and content credibility. These insights

demonstrate that teachers are not passive users of technology but active agents seeking to align digital practice with their core educational values. However, many felt unsupported in navigating these shifts, pointing to a lack of institutional guidance or professional development focused on ethical literacy and reflective digital teaching (Zakia & Yana, 2023).

Implications:
The implication is clear: if digital pedagogy is to be meaningful and sustainable, it must integrate reflective and ethical dimensions alongside technical training. Supporting teacher autonomy and professionalism in the digital age requires more than toolkits and platforms it demands frameworks that empower educators to make thoughtful, value-based decisions about how technology shapes learning, interaction, and responsibility in their classrooms.

The four thematic findings of this study access, evaluation, use, and reflection can be synthesized into an integrated framework that redefines digital literacy in English language teaching (ELT) as a multifaceted, context-responsive process. At its foundation, structural support (Access) is essential for enabling teachers to engage meaningfully with digital tools; without reliable infrastructure and institutional investment, efforts at innovation remain fragmented and inequitable. Building upon that, critical pedagogy (Evaluation) emphasizes the need for teachers and students to move beyond passive consumption toward active, analytical engagement with digital content. This critical orientation must be matched with practical innovation (Use), where technology is not only accessible but meaningfully integrated into instruction in ways that are adaptive, student-centered, and pedagogically sound. Finally, ethical reflection (Reflection) calls attention to the deeper shifts in teacher identity, relational dynamics, and moral responsibility brought about by digital integration. These four dimensions are not isolated; rather, they are deeply interconnected shaped by teacher beliefs, institutional cultures, and broader policy frameworks. A truly holistic approach to digital literacy in ELT must therefore acknowledge and support this interplay, promoting not just technical proficiency, but also pedagogical intentionality, critical awareness, and ethical integrity in the face of rapid technological change.

This study, while offering valuable insights into English language teachers' perceptions of digital literacy, is not without limitations. First, the research was conducted with a relatively small and localized sample, which may limit the generalizability of its findings to broader educational contexts. Participants were drawn from a specific geographic and institutional background, and their experiences may not reflect those of teachers in other regions or school types. Second, the study focused exclusively on teachers' perspectives, without triangulating the data with student feedback, classroom observations, or performance-based evidence. As a result, the findings capture only one side of the digital teaching-learning dynamic. Third, the study relied primarily on self-reported data through interviews, which may be subject to bias, selective memory, or social desirability effects. Future research would benefit from incorporating multiple data sources to deepen and validate the findings.

Suggestion:
In light of the findings and limitations, several practical and research-based recommendations emerge. At the institutional level, schools and educational authorities must invest in robust digital infrastructure and ensure sustained support for teachers through technical assistance and pedagogical mentoring. Access alone is insufficient without ongoing, hands-on professional development. From a pedagogical perspective, teacher training programs should move beyond technical training and embed digital criticality and ethics as core competencies enabling teachers to model evaluative and reflective practices in their classrooms. Regarding future research, scholars should explore students' experiences and perspectives to complement teacher narratives, and examine the long-term impact of digital literacy integration on learning outcomes through longitudinal or mixed-method studies. At the policy level, national education frameworks must prioritize equity in digital access, addressing regional disparities and supporting the development of locally relevant, context-aware digital pedagogy. These multidimensional efforts are essential to

ensuring that digital literacy becomes a transformative not merely functional component of English language education.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored how English language teachers perceive and navigate digital literacy across four key dimensions: access, evaluation, use, and reflection. The findings reveal that while teachers generally recognize the pedagogical potential of digital technologies, their capacity to integrate these tools meaningfully is shaped by a combination of structural conditions, professional knowledge, and ethical considerations. Unequal access to infrastructure remains a foundational barrier, highlighting the need for systemic investment and institutional readiness. At the same time, teachers' reliance on informal strategies for evaluating digital content underscores the urgency of embedding critical media literacy into professional development programs. Though many educators use technology pragmatically favoring familiar, low-barrier tools their reflective narratives point to deeper transformations in teacher identity, classroom relationships, and ethical responsibilities in digital spaces. Synthesizing these findings suggests that digital literacy in ELT must be understood not as a fixed competency, but as a dynamic and context-sensitive practice one that requires the alignment of structural support, critical pedagogy, practical innovation, and ethical reflection. Importantly, this study demonstrates that effective digital integration cannot be achieved through isolated training or access alone; it demands coherent strategies that are rooted in teacher agency, grounded in pedagogical integrity, and responsive to sociocultural realities. By centering teacher voices, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of digital literacy and offers a foundation for rethinking how educators are prepared, supported, and empowered in an increasingly digital educational landscape.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

All authors contributed substantially to the development of this research. The research design, data collection, and analysis were collaboratively carried out by the research team. Writing of the manuscript, including the formulation of arguments, thematic organization, and discussion of findings, was done jointly. All authors critically reviewed and revised the content, approved the final version, and are collectively responsible for the integrity and accuracy of the work.

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