

INTEGRATING DIGITAL LITERACY INTO ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) CLASS: A COOPERATIVE LEARNING APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

In this ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) era in which internet service spreads widely over the world enables people to access abundant information more easily. Digital literacy skills are crucially needed to filter reliable and unreliable information. Digital literacy competencies are also essential to filter the massive spread of fake news or hoax and hate speech. In education, digital literacy competencies need to be taught and trained to students to gain information, analyse digital information content critically and to use information in many types of formats from a number of sources obtained through computers. Therefore, digital literacy skills can be integrated in learning. Cooperative learning is a learning approach that allow students take part in group learning activities to analyze, synthesize and reflect thoughtful evaluation of a digital content. This study aims to foster integration of digital literacy competencies into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class through cooperative learning approach. The subjects of this study were 37 students of 6th semester of TBI-1 (English Education Department) class of the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. This study was conducted using qualitative method. Data collection techniques utilized secondary research and observation. The research findings show that students who are dominated by Generation Z are literate enough in performing digital literacy skills through cooperative learning approach.

INTRODUCTION

The current era of globalization is causing significant changes in the field of information, communication and technology (ICT). The rapid development of technology today requires everyone to be able to adapt. For example, in the field of communication, in the early 2000s, we still used a pager that could only send very short messages with limited letter characters, then developed with the use of cellphones / mobile phones even in a simple form. Over time, communication technology changed more advanced, more sophisticated, smart handphones began to be used by consumers. With the various features offered, it turns out that it is also able to help human tasks. From 3G internet services developed to 4G and is currently being developed for 5G services. This 4G technology which is currently widely used allows people to access internet freely. Various applications offered can be downloaded easily such as social media applications (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, twitter, etc.). There are also applications for education, entertainment, finance, health, shopping, photography, games, etc. The use of this internet

technology can be a double-edged sword if not used wisely. Technology can be destructive, especially for learners (young learners, adolescents) who psychologically have not been able to digest well all the digital information/content they access from their gadgets, therefore the roles of parents, teachers and adults around them is necessary to guide them to use the technology wisely. In the world of education, the role of teachers is very necessary to limit and supervise the use of gadgets in schools, especially during the learning process. Schools issue regulations that prohibit students from carrying gadgets and using them during the learning process, but in reality, the use of these devices cannot be separated from today's modern needs to access information and communicate quickly. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the importance of digital literacy and teach digital literacy in English language class.

Eshet and Alkalai (2004) defined digital literacy as a survival skill including system of skills and strategies in the digital environment. Furthermore, Hague & Payton (2010) described digital literacy as the ability to access, to share, to create, to collaborate and to communicate effectively by applying digital media. Digital literacy is defined as the skills associated with using technology to enable users to find, evaluate, organize, create, and communicate information (Museum and Library Services Act of 2010, p. 3) and the ability to use those skills to solve problems in technology-rich environments (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013).

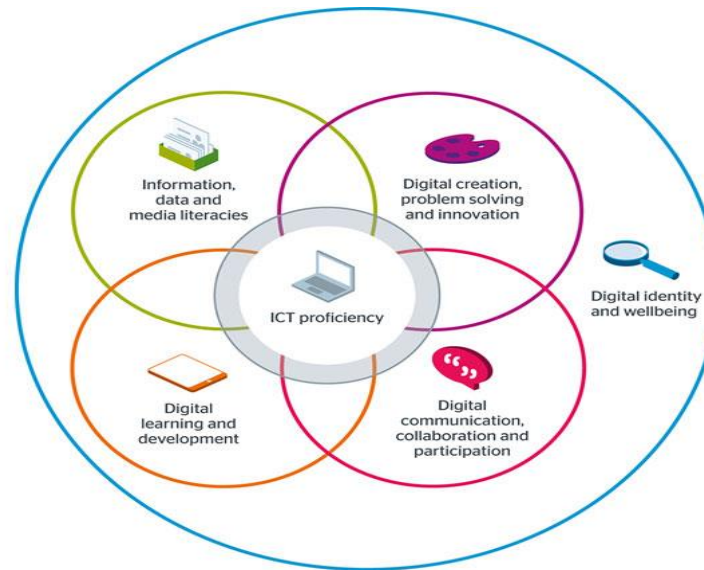
How pivotal Digital Literacy is?

Today, technology cannot be separated from our daily routines. Most survival skills in our daily basis would require digital literacy activities. As Harris (2015) stated “English language skills and digital literacy are essential for obtaining and keeping a family-sustaining job, supporting children in school, participating in community life, obtaining community services, and accessing further education and training”. Digital literacy is not enough with computer skills. It tells what people do with technology, how they solve problems, and how they communicate effectively.

Digital Literacy in EFL Class

The use of technology in educational system is becoming increasing as the impact of the era of revolution 4.0. Information, communication and technology (ICT) literacy is nowadays considered as being a third important skill for work force and life alongside literacy and numeracy (EC, 2000a; EC 2001; DfES, 2003; NIACE, 2005). Within Europe, ICT has been identified as a key goal of educational policy and a major strategy aiming at helping EU citizens to participate in the 21st century knowledge society and the knowledge-based economy (EC,2000b; EC, 2001. In a study conducted by Kerr, Rynearson and Kerr (2006) found that higher levels of skill in operating computer software and hardware positively affected the high output of learning outcomes to

students. Furthermore, as the facilitators and motivators in the teaching and learning process, the success of the integration of digital literacy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom is related to teachers' decision about the matters.



Jisc. (2016). Digital capabilities: The six elements. Retrieved from <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/rd/projects/building-digital-capability> (opens in new window)

Teachers have an essential role to encourage students in developing and strengthening digital literacy in the learning process by experiencing, practicing, and applying tasks within the classroom that will lead to their ability to function in a digital world. For example, students must have specific skills when reading online text that may contain embedded resources such as hyperlinks, audio clips, graphs, or charts that require students to make choices. Paradoxically, even though prominent discourses within the area of digital literacy have revolved young people as highly digitally literate generation, as reflected in terms such as “Digital Natives” (Prensky, 2001) or the “Net generation” (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005), in fact not all young people acquire the necessary competencies or literacies through their use of technology. Students need to be taught about online safety, communicate responsibly in social media and how to discern trustworthy sources and recognizing fake news versus real news. For these reasons, teachers need to expose digital literacy skills in EFL classroom through learning approaches or learning models. Students are motivated to not only using technical ability to access technology but also understanding the content, active and interactive functions of producing messages.

Cooperative Learning, or learning in groups, is one of the most exciting approaches in education is suitable to promote digital literacy in English language classroom. Cooperative Learning is defined by Johnson and Holubec (1993, p.9) as the instructional use of small groups

so that the students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. In a cooperative group, every member plays an important role. The relation among the different roles is cooperative and not hierarchical. Equality is guaranteed by a rotation based on the principle of equal participation so equality is also structurally guaranteed by the fact that the roles are interchangeable among the members of the group. The roles are established along thematic/academic aims as well as along the learning, personal and social competencies to be developed.

A classroom that is cooperative and therefore not competitive-usually involves the learner-centered characteristics. As students work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come to each other to achieve goals successfully. Active learning principles are used in Cooperative Learning. Students take part in group learning activities that are aimed at encouraging analysis, synthesis, reflection and thoughtful evaluation of content. Cooperative Learning allows students to engage actively with the new material. Students play as active participants in this approach. In terms of the classroom tasks, teachers stimulate complex, engaging, interesting and relevant tasks to address a range of higher cognitive skills and understanding, so that students can see that it is easier for a group to complete rather than an individual. Lotan (2003) uses the term *groupworthy tasks* for appropriate tasks which are structured so that the students must interact by sharing their experiences and justifying their opinions.

Research has shown an advantage for cooperative learning (as opposed to individual learning) on such factors as promoting intrinsic motivation, heightening self-esteem, creating caring and altruistic relationships and lowering anxiety and prejudice (Oxford 1997:445). In addition, students learning cooperatively make use of all members' resources and skills by asking each other for information and help, evaluating each other's ideas and monitoring each other's contributions.

METHOD

This study was conducted with qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social human problem, Creswell (2012). To collect the data, the writer applied secondary research and observation. Secondary research is collecting existing data in the form of texts, images, audio or video recordings, etc. Then, some observations were conducted by recording what she has seen, heard, or encountered in detailed field notes. In order to assess students' digital literacy skills, the researcher initiates Group Project Assignment based on Cooperative Learning Approach. All groups were instructed to design a classroom activity about Present Continuous Tense. They must

present it in the form of a creative video. The level of the targeted students is 8th grade of Junior High School. Each group was allowed to apply one of techniques/ tricks in teaching the topic such as using game, fun-educational video, quiz, exercise, song, etc. The same instruction was explained namely they were obligated to design a classroom activity using online learning platforms such as Canva, Padlet, Flipgrid, Quizizz, Kahoot and so forth. They were free to choose one of them based on their preferences. The sample of this research was taken from 6th semester students of English Language Education Department, class TBI-1 of State Islamic University of North Sumatera (UIN SU). The total of the students is 37, they all joined with INOVASI PENDIDIKAN course that is taught by the writer. Students were divided into seven groups which consist of 5-6 students each group. As additional information, all students were born in the year of 2001-2002 (age between 20 years old) that is called as “Generation Z” who are known as first “digital natives”. Generation Z (also known as Gen Z) refers to the generation that was born between 1997-2012, following millennials. Whereas Millennials were considered “digital pioneers,” who bore witness to the explosion of technology and social media, Generation Z was born into a world of peak technological innovation where information was immediately accessible and social media increasingly ubiquitous. This generation has been raised on the internet and social media. An abundance of information is at their fingertips. This main reason underlies why the researcher chose this challenging task for them. Due to the unstable pandemic COVID-19 situation, the university still obliged the 6th semester students to have online classrooms. Thus, this group task was conducted online. Students discussed the group project using social media applications such as WhatsApp video call or WhatsApp chat service. Indeed, it was a challenge in doing this task. The groups were informed that the scoring system of the group project depended on the level of each group’s creativity in presenting the teaching material. Yet, the content must be relevant with the given instructions and the teaching presentation must be lively and engaging for students. The duration of doing this task were about 2 weeks. When they finished doing the task, the representative of each group would upload their video via LMS of the university. Since the size of uploaded files is limited, maximum only 1 MB, so students just sent the link of Google Drive via LMS.

DISCUSSIONS

After 2 weeks, the researcher downloaded and checked all the videos carefully. Each group has performed digital literacy skills well such as using technology to access, manage, evaluate, manipulate and create information in an ethical and sustainable way. Most of the groups have produced creative, relevant, lively and interesting contents for their students. Based on the

instructions described before, they were requested to design an engaging classroom activity, they followed the instructions well, there was a teacher who explained the material first, the rest members of the group acted as students. Then, teacher invited students' participations to involve in the activity by answering questions, commenting and questioning. At the end of the teaching session, teachers gave constructive feedbacks to the students. The classroom interactions appeared active, participative and interesting. Each group enjoyed the activity and their collaborations and cooperations as a team work was highly appreciated.

Here are the screenshots of group project videos:

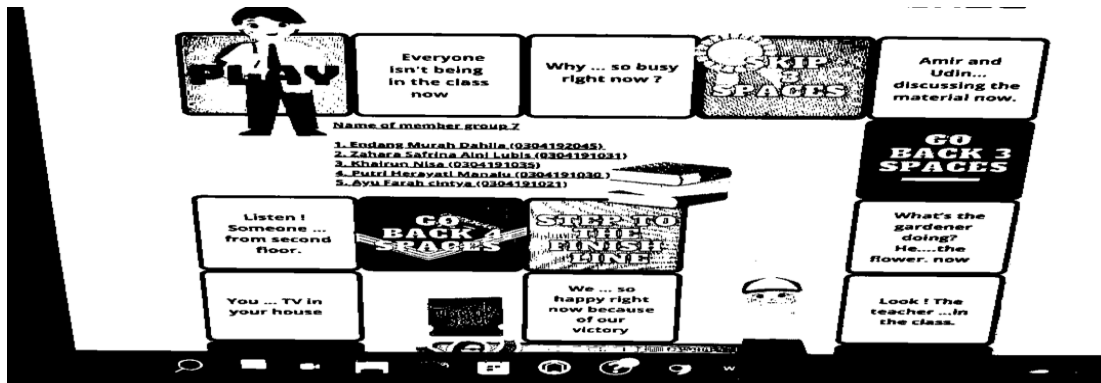


Figure 1: CANVA platform

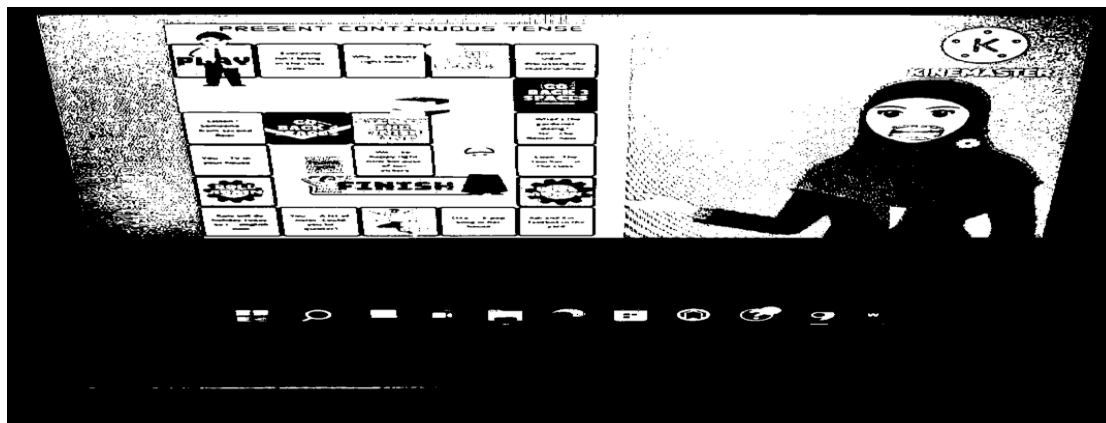


Figure 2: CANVA & KINEMASTER platform

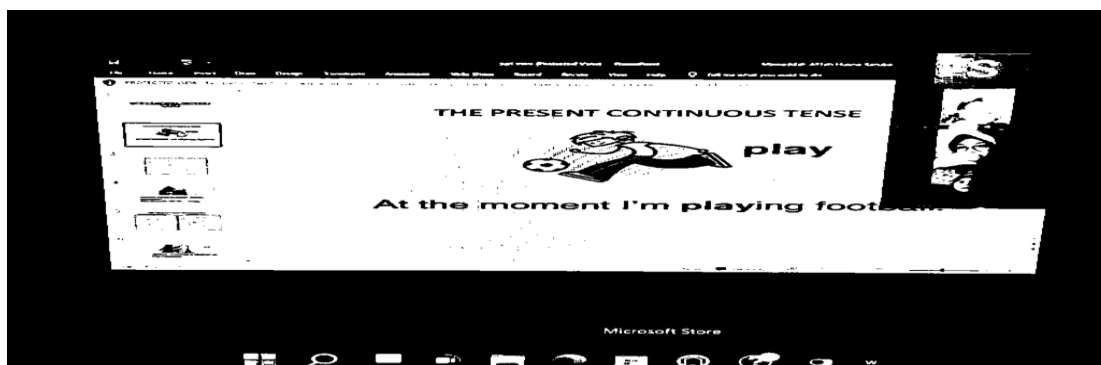


Figure 3: KAHOOT platform

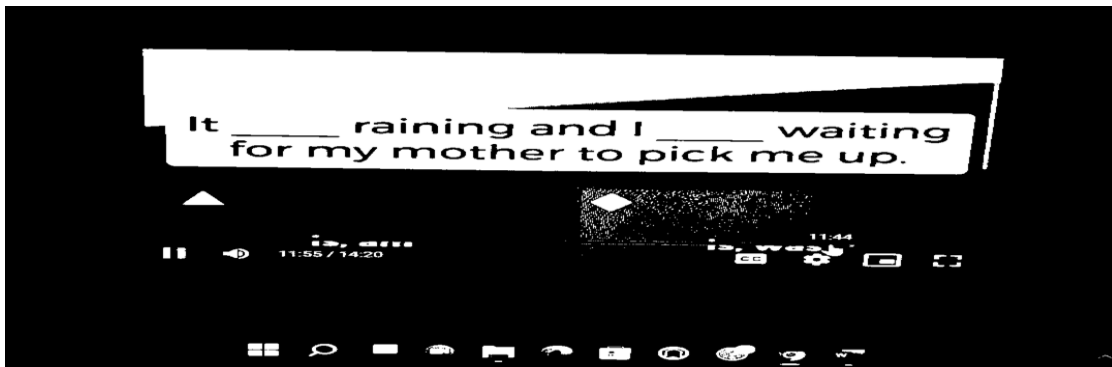


Figure 4: Quizizz platform

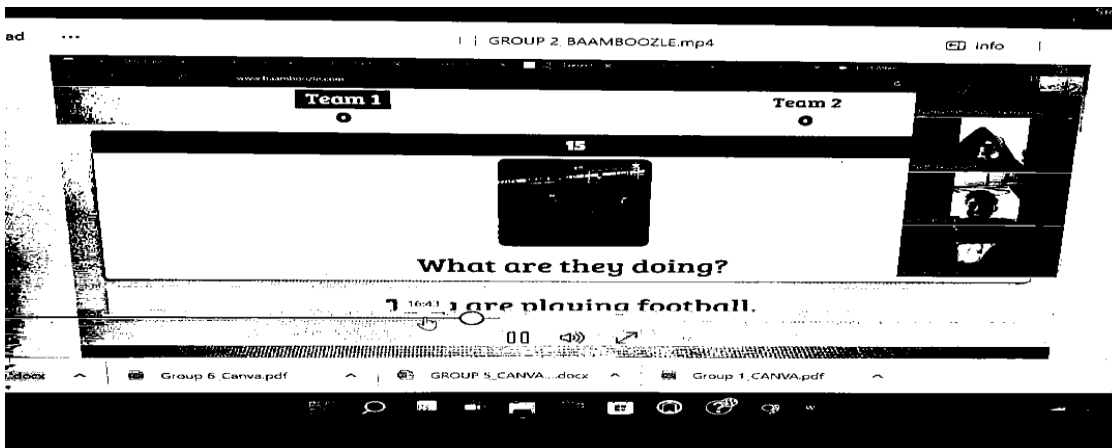


Figure 5: Bamboozle platform



Figure 6: Bamboozle platform

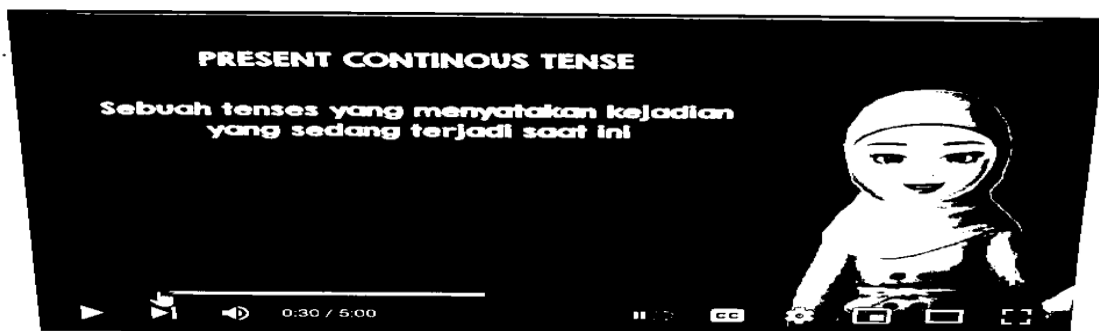


Figure 7: YouTube platform

CONCLUSIONS

After doing observations and collecting secondary research, the research findings indicate that teachers use educational online platforms to enrich their teaching materials. Moreover, digital platforms are recommended to use to gain more active responds from students compared to conventional method such as giving a lecture, it seems monotonous for today's generations, particularly when we are dealing with Generation Z and onward. The integration of digital literacy in teaching and learning process is unavoidable in this ICT era. Students are expected to be literate to digital technology that may help them to be independent learners. As instructors, teachers must prepare learners to meet the demands of a rapidly changing technological environment. Digital literacy activities in the student-centered classroom are ideal for bringing the real world into the classroom, making the learning experience more relevant and authentic. Teachers must be able to choose innovative and creative learning media based on the varying degrees of digital literacy of their students, lesson objectives and consider specific strategies to reach the lesson objectives. Besides, teachers should be able to integrate digital literacy activities into instruction (planning), provide multilevel and differentiated instruction (instructing), evaluate learning outcomes and processes within technology-enhanced lessons. Assessing learning, as well as assessing the effectiveness of digital literacy instruction and learning can be done through rubrics and other tools.

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