

Chapter 5

Digital Literacy in the EFL Classroom: Main Barriers and Implications

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ABSTRACT

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have revolutionized 21st century society by the incorporation of a wide range of digital tools in individuals' daily life. In education, the use of new technologies affects students, future teachers, and in-service teachers, as they need to be trained for proper utilization. The aim of this research is to analyze the already existing literature with the regard to what extent EFL pre-service and in-service teachers' level of digital literacy skills affect the linguistic skills development in the EFL classroom. The study sheds light about the importance of a high-quality digital literacy training for EFL students and teachers, as this is the only way to overcome the barriers towards the achievement of digitally literate students and to meaningfully promote the linguistic skills in the foreign language classroom (reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

INTRODUCTION

The current globalized world, in which the domain of new technologies is considered one of the main axes towards employability, social and personal development, requires trained citizens in terms of 21st century skills (Mahmud, M.M, Fátima, T., Lashari, T. A., & Waheed, Z., 2023). The 21st century skills are defined as “skills, aptitudes, and attitudes to succeed in the workplace and 21st century society” and highlight

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three types of competences: “learning skills (creativity and innovation, critical thinking, and problem solving; communication and collaboration); literacy skills (information literacy; media literacy; ICT literacy), and life skills (flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction; social and intercultural skills; productivity and accountability; leadership and responsibility)”(González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2022: 2). In this study, the focus will be, specially, on learning and literacy skills, as are the most relevant ones for the educational contexts.

The 21st century skills competences are equivalent to the ones included in the European Key Competences For Lifelong Learning Framework, which identifies the current and future needs of citizens, and establishes a series of measures to develop this set of eight competences by the incorporation of “innovative learning approaches, assessment methods and support to educational staff” (European Commission, 2019). The European Key Competences are (1) literacy competence; (2) multilingual competence; (3) mathematical competence and competence in science, technology and engineering; (4) digital competence; (5) personal, social and learning to learn competence; (6) citizenship competence; (7) entrepreneurship competence; (8) cultural awareness and expression competence. The European Commission (2019) divided all these competences into three subcategories, named skills, attitudes and knowledge, that conform the general concept each of them represent, with an equivalent grade of importance for learning.

The present research is focused on the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. For this purpose, the European Key Competences that need to be further contextualized are the following ones:

- **Literacy competence:** “ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio and digital materials across disciplines and contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way” (European Commission, 2019).
- **Multilingual competence:** “ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main dimensions of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one’s wants or needs” (European Commission, 2019).
- **Digital competence:** “involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation,

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