



Digital Literacy Skills Used in Iraqi EFL University Classes during COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Covid-19 has driven the globe in a new education-focused trend. Many advanced learning institutions in the present aspire to digital literacy as a result of the Covid-enforced shutdown in late-2020. Digital literacy is the ability to share, find, create, and evaluate content using the internet. Digital literacy is the literacy that demands a cognitive level to analyze, access, and make information from digital devices. This study attempts to find out the digital literacy skills used in Iraqi EFL University classrooms. The study sample is 150 4th –year EFL undergraduates, of the College of Education for Human Sciences, Wasit University. Results illustrated that item 2 achieved the highest weighted mean (4.68. 93%). Meanwhile, item 19 got the lowest weighted mean (2.34. 46%). The study, therefore, recommends that instructors and students keep up to date, develop their own digital competencies, and understand how digital devices can help present information in their own native language.

Key Words: Digital Literacy, Learning skills, COVID-19, Iraq EFL undergraduates, Teaching and Learning.

استعمال مهارات المعرفة الرقمية في الصفوف الجامعات العراقية لدارسي

اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية خلال مدة تفشي جائحة كوفيد - ١٩

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المخلص

قاد كوفيد ١٩ العالم في اتجاه جديد يركز على التعليم. إذ تطمح العديد من مؤسسات التعلم المتقدمة في الوقت الحاضر إلى المعرفة الرقمية ؛ نتيجة للإغلاق المفروض بسببه) كوفيد ١٩ في أواخر عام ٢٠٢٠). والمعرفة الرقمية هي القدرة على مشاركة المحتوى والعثور عليه وإنشائه وتقييمه باستخدام الإنترنت. المعرفة الرقمية هي معرفة تتطلب مستوى معرفيًا ؛ لتحليل المعلومات والوصول إليها وصنعها من الأجهزة الرقمية. تحاول هذه الدراسة معرفة مهارات المعرفة الرقمية المستخدمة في الصفوف الدراسية الجامعية لطلبة دارسي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية. إذ بلغت عينة الدراسة (١٥٠) طالباً جامعياً في المرحلة الرابعة من كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة واسط. حيث أوضحت النتائج أن الفقرة ٢ حققت أعلى متوسط مرجح (%٤٦,٣٤,٢). لذلك توصي الدراسة بأن يظل الأساتذة والطلاب على اطلاع دائم ، ويطورون كفاءاتهم الرقمية الخاصة ، ويفهمون كيف يمكن للأجهزة الرقمية أن تساعد في تقديم المعلومات بلغتهم الأم.

كلمات مهمة : المعرفة الرقمية ، المهارات ، كوفيد ١٩ ، طلاب جامعة العراق ، التدريس والتعلم ، القرن الحادي والعشرون.

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed Covid-19 on 30th January 2020 as an international public health emergency of global concern and a pandemic on 11th March 2020, UNESCO reported that out of 91.3% totality registered students in 188 countries in all ranks of learning have been affected, Lippi et al. (2020). Pandemic had a serious influence on the global education system, for it forced a worldwide close of most educational institutions. Soon, a rapid shift from traditional to online and distance learning has emerged using digital and technology learning skills (Butler-Henderson,



2020). According to Phuapan et al. (2016) digital literacy is essential skill in using technology, communication instrument to estimate, access, coordinate, arrange, and present the community with information. Gilster (1997:10) argued 'digital literacy is the capability to recognize and use information in various designs from large range of sources when it is existing by computer. Many educational devices have been shaped by technology. The tools go to so-called "Digital Technology" such as computers, the internet; tablets, iPods, mobile phones,..etc, have been used globally in education (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Given the quick and frequent growth of digital technology, persons are involved to use an increasing diversity of cognitive, technical, and sociological skills to do task and resolve problems in digital environment (Ala-Mutka, 2011). The world now, accordingly, can be a world of technology.

1.1. Aims

The study aims to explore the sort of digital literacy skills used by Iraqi EFL 4th –year undergraduates.

1.2. Limits

The study is limited to Iraqi EFL 4th-year undergraduates at the College of Education for Humanities, University of Karbala, and the College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University across the academic year 2021-2022.

1.3. Procedures

The study proceeds as follows:

- 1-Selecting 150 4th year Iraqi EFL undergraduates (males and females) of the Department of English, College of Education, Wasit University.
- 2-Designing an expert-supervised rubric to measure the digital literacy skills used by Iraqi EFL undergraduates.
- 4- Interpreting the rubric results using appropriate statistical means.
- 5- Reaching conclusions and proposing recommendations.

2. Literature Review

1-1 Digital Literacy Skill

Technology has crossed the world in the past few decades, connecting people in a new way. Consequently, people of all countries have not only had to learn to employ latest technology, but they also had to learn how to



cooperate with others. Skills that include these capacities have been integrated with "digital literacy" Spire, et. al (2019). Digital literacy first emerged in literature in the late-90s with the work of Gilster (1997:10), who defined it as 'the capacity to know and use the data coming from different sources with the help of computer.

(McCord, 2015) defined DLS as information literacy, which involved a cognitive standard to look, clarify, and make information from digital devices. Meanwhile, Özden (2018) illustrated DLS more accurately as the capacity to gather information from a digital average. Information can be taken from a diversity of resources, as Spire, et. al (2019) mentioned. DLS, then, contains of multimedia, visual display, video, phrase, audio, movement graphics, and language. In short, DLS means the ability to use digital technology, communication tools, and the digital system in which users live and interact proficiently.

1.2. Digital Natives and Digital Immigrants

According to Rothman (2016), digital natives are the persons born between 1996 and 2010, known to have grown up with technology and to have spent their whole lives using the internet, videogames, cell phones, computers, and all the other digital devices. Those are were not digital-era born, born in 1979 and in pre-1979, but they adapted later to most features of digital technology, are identified as digital immigrants (Prensky,2001:1,2).

Shatto & Erwin (2016) say many students enrolling in university today have a high-level of experience with digital technology and medium, but they do not look ready to covering the bridge among individual and educational use of technology. So, as educational knowledge is not merged in institutional education, then technological, too, must be merged through structured learning skills. For this reason, (Santos & Serpa, 2017) pointed out that advanced education institutions must encourage clearly and deliberately logical DLS strategies that mix the optimizations of the capabilities where both instructor and students, as users, are enabled to invent new capabilities.



2.3. Barriers of EFL-Focused DLS

It is not easy to be conscious of a number of the obstacles met by instructors, who want to observe their students proficient in DLS skills in the 21st -Century. One of the obstacles is the complexity of internet access. According to Eryansyah et al. (2019) DLS between students is receiving minor when they do not obtain adequate internet access. The second barrier for students is that during complex content of materials they can't be simply realized by the students. Third, Horton, (2008) argues that students must be enabled to use digital medium in sequence to understand all the materials of digital sources. Fourth, Robertson, & Ellerbee, (2008) cite language as another challenge; computer technology comes with a set of jargon that is not frequently in a typical English class for starters. Fifth, Hosseini (2018) showed that the need of time in technology preparation lessons is important challenge in DLS teaching. Sixth, Margaryan, et. al (2011) hold that the lack of knowledge and low comprehension lead students to low DLS skills. Seventh, a key barrier in DLS is poor budgeting to buy technology. Alice (2012) assumed that college poor budgeting blocks an instructor from working wider platforms of technology. Finally, keeping up with technology. We live in an ever-changing world, where technology becomes challenged almost as rapidly as it becomes available. Lankshear and Knobel (2006) mentioned that both instructors and students must be stimulated to increase their DLSs at the present.

2.4 Benefits of EFL-Focused DLS

According to Solano et al. (2017), EFL instructors need to integrate DLS technologies to attract students' English skills. Authentic resources can be used by EFL instructors to expand young students' speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. The first skill is speaking; digital literacy develops students' spoken ability. The students are motivated to listen to songs, news, podcasts, or videos from the internet. As (Lawlor & Donnelly, 2010) point out that podcasts can be used to develop students' speaking skills. The second skill is listening; digital literacy attends to give students more engagement with English podcasts and song on the internet. English podcasts and songs develop



students' listening skills and working with English songs is one of the successful ways for learning listening skills between students (Klein, 2005). Third, writing skills; as (Yancey 2009) mentioned that social network tool such as Twitter, or Facebook support students' better-writing presentation, as they get to practice both outside and inside the classrooms. The last skill is reading; digital habits assist to develop students' literacy during exciting online reading sources, Lewin (1997), says that students are straight encouraged with online reading sources equipped with colour comics and animated texts.

2.5. DLS in EFL Classroom

Many universities and colleges surrounding the globe provisionally delayed classrooms learning and teaching as outcome of the increase of the Covid-19 pandemic. Learning and Teaching tasks were then altered from mainly head to head orders to completely online. During COVID-19, DLS has become an essential part of the classes and become a condition for instructors and students Tejedor, et al (276:2020). Digital literacy program can help instructor with differentiation and personalization in the class by present materials and customized task that is harmonized with each student's ability (Dzekoe, 2020). As a result use of digital literacy software gives students more individualized education and lets them work at their own pace. (Cahyani & Cahyono, 2021) point out that instructors assent on the efficiency of teaching English skills using technology tracked by the difference of technology such as notebook/ computer, video/television, email, digital camera, websites, the virtual web forum, weblog (ibid). Learning and teaching practice involved both instructors and students contribute to producing a digital literacy atmosphere to enhance learning engagement (Pratolo, & Solikhati, 2021). According to Cahyani and Cahyono (2012), instructors must be supplied with different kinds of technology in their classrooms to form the way instructors teach language.

2.6. Components of DLS in the 21st Century

DLSs are required by an individual in the 21st century. These skills instructors and students require using software or operating digital devices. They are dynamic, involving a frequent attempt to continue with fresh practices and technologies.



1-Information DLS. The information profusion reason by information and communication technology needs skills for seeking, assessing, and managing information in digital environments (Catts & Lau, 2008).

2-Communication DLS. Information and communication technology has made it familiar to contact a broad individual and contact at a distance, all over the place, and faster. Audiences can express themselves, interact with others, and establish relationships, at any distance in space and time (Yu et al., 2010).

3-Collaboration DLS. Information and communication technology is particularly helpful when team should share data and make decision crossway works and nationwide borders (Wang, 2010).

4-Critical Thinking DLS. Critical thinking is most essential because, in a worldwide online environment, individuals contribute and sources are shaped with different competencies and intention (Starkey, 2011).

5-Creative DLS. Information and communication technology can support creativity in several areas, including creating, developing, or recognizing ideas (Loveless, 2007).

6-Problem-Solving DLS. Students want the skills to solve unfamiliar problems, find several answers, and shift information to new situations (Barak, 2018).

3. Procedures

3.1. Sample, Data, and Source

The study population consists of the 4th year undergraduates studying at the Department of English, College of Education for Humanities, University of Karbala, and College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University. The total population is 220. The sample of the current study has been chosen from the 4th year students registered at the Department of English College of Education, Wasit University in the academic year (2001-2022). The totality number of fourth-year students is 150 students.

3.2. Instrument



To attain study aims, an valued tool has been chosen. This rubric has been distributed and constructed to the 4th year students at the Department of English as a statistical instrument. The survey is a set of sentences. It includes of 30 items which students must strongly agree, slightly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagree on as shown in the survey.

Table (1)

Rubric to Measure DLS

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Students frequently use DLS in learning.					
2.	Students can collect information from the internet.					
3.	Students can search for information effectively.					
4.	Students can analyze information from various online sources.					
5.	Students can set their timetables to do their online assignments.					
6.	Students are happy with using digital technologies for learning.					
7.	Students are satisfied with the university's DLS support and training courses.					
8.	Students can solve their technical issues.					
9.	Students think critically when using in-class DLS.					
10	Students understand the relationship between DLS and subject material contents.					
11	Students can seek, find, assess, use and apply the know-how of DLS.					
12	DLS resources are available for institutional and private learning					
13	Students can use new digital tools to advance their skills and knowledge.					
14	Students can use mobile phones and devices to learn English as in online dictionaries, learning blogs, and electronic libraries.					



15	Students can use social networks to learn English as in YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram					
16	Students can use DLS professionally and they also can recognize best practices in security concerns.					
17	Students download digital information, software, applications, files, databases, etc., illegally.					
18	Students use digital technology for legal purposes.					
19	Students download movies, music, and tracks illegally.					
20	Students are aware of copyright concerns.					
21	Students use DLS in threatening or intimidating purposes.					
22	Students are aware of the illegal download of files and resources.					
23	Students are aware of the risk of showing private data online.					
24	Students can protect their privacy and data from online hacking and malware.					
25	Students can recognize the sources of online information.					
26	Students can identify viewpoints/biases in online information					
27	Students need DLS education in English language learning					
28	Students understand how online actions may affect the real world.					
29	Students can critically reflect on digital know-how for future development.					
30	Students can observe trending and future DLS.					

3.3. Face Validity

The most complex reason for a good test is validity. However, it is of major importance in selecting or constructing any research tool. Richard et al. (2013:



396) showed face validity as the degree to which instrument measure what is assumed to measure, or can be used successfully for planned purposes" Meanwhile, Ebel & Robert (1978: 8) consider face validity as the way the test appears or look to the educators, examinees, test administrators, and the similar to.

To make certain the face validity of the test and its appropriateness for the fourth academic students, the test has been reviewed by experienced ELT, linguistics, and literature jury members. Those members recommended that the test is valid in its face and that the test items are suitable for the the intended purpose. The test was approved 100% by jury members, with a few minor notes and modifications.

Table (2)
List of Jury Members

No.	Academic Rank	Name	Major	Affiliation
1	Assistant Professor	Al-Husseini Hashim Alwai	Linguistics	College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University, Ph.D. in Applied linguistics
2	Assistant Professor	AZ-Zubaidy Thamir Rashid	Literature	College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University, Ph.D. in English Literature
3	Assistant professor	AL-Ibadi Qassim Hamadi	ELT	College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University, Ph.D. in ELT
4	Assistant Professor	Abdulsada, Mohammed Nasser	Linguistics.	College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University, M.A. in General linguistics
5	Instructor	AL-Rubayi Adnan Zeidan	Linguistics	College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University, Ph.D. in Applied linguistics



3.4. Pilot Administration

Johnson (1998:2) pointed out that pilot study are small study that consent to techniques and procedures to be consolidated as well as generate precursive information. The pilot study aims at checking the clarity of survey instructions and items, defining the exact time needed to answer the items, analyzing the test items to find out the difficulty level, and discriminating power points. To perform a pilot study, 70 4th-year EFL undergraduates randomly selected from the Department of English College of Education for Humanities, University of Karbala, were pilot tested. The pilot administration findings indicated that there is no doubt in survey instructions.

3.5. Test Reliability

According to Brown (1988:155), if the similar test is given to the similar subject or matched subject at two different periods, it must give similar outcomes. Reliability evaluated in this method is usually referenced to as test/retest reliability. Reliability is not only associated with the contents of the test but it is also associated with the gain of the test. As a result, the whole scale reliability, following the Pearson Correlation Formula, was found to be 0.80.

3.6. Final Survey

After achieving face validity, pilot administration, and reliability, the finalized survey was exposed to the EFL 4th-year undergraduates of the Department of English Language, College of Education for Humanities, Wasit University. They were asked to react to the survey items by picking single options out of multiple sub-points (strongly agree, slightly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree the use of DLS). The tested survey achieved the results illustrated below.

Table (3)

The Weighted Mean and the Weighted Percentile of the Survey Items in Using DLS

No	Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Weighted mean	Weighted Percentile
1	2	119	20	8	1	2	4.68	93%
2	14	115	22	8	3	2	4.63	92%



3	13	113	23	5	6	3	4.58	91%
4	25	110	25	10	2	3	4.58	91%
5	4	113	19	10	6	2	4.56	91%
6	15	111	16	19	2	2	4.54	90%
7	24	106	23	8	9	4	4.45	89%
8	7	105	22	12	7	4	4.44	88%
9	23	102	22	14	10	2	4.41	88%
10	3	23	121	6	0	0	4.11	82%
11	1	17	116	13	3	1	3.96	79%
12	6	23	105	18	1	3	3.96	79%
13	18	17	118	8	6	1	3.96	79%
14	30	13	118	10	8	1	3.89	77%
15	29	12	114	17	6	1	3.86	77%
16	12	12	112	17	7	2	3.83	76%
17	16	14	112	15	3	6	3.83	76%
18	28	16	105	18	9	2	3.82	76%
19	11	13	110	17	4	6	3.8	76%
20	26	12	105	19	11	3	3.74	74%
21	5	24	17	100	7	2	3.36	67%
22	27	20	25	98	3	4	3.36	67%
23	8	7	17	116	9	1	3.13	62%
24	21	8	12	101	14	15	2.89	57%
25	10	11	18	22	97	2	2.59	51%
26	22	8	20	24	97	1	2.58	51%
27	20	9	22	16	102	1	2.57	51%
28	9	7	17	26	97	3	2.52	50%
29	17	8	16	11	108	7	2.4	48%
30	19	7	12	16	105	10	2.34	46.6%

3.7. Results and Conclusion

Based on the results obtained from the present study, Data has been analyzed statistically by using the weighted mean and the weighted percentile to find the statistical differences for using digital skills in learning. We see that the first item is 2 (Students can collect information from the internet) got the highest weighted mean (4.68. 93). The second item is 14 (Students can use mobile phones and devices to learn English as in online dictionaries, learning blogs, and electronic libraries.) got a high weighted mean (4.63, 92%). Meanwhile, items 30 and 29 (Students can observe trending and future DLS.),



(Students can critically reflect on digital know-how for future development.) got an equal-weighted mean (3.89. 77%, 3.86. 77%). In the last domain, item 19 (Students download movies, music, and tracks illegally.) got the lowest weighted mean (2.34. 46%).

The study aims to find out the awareness of the use of DLS in Iraqi EFL University classrooms. The populations of the study are the students at the Department of English College of Education for the Human Sciences University of Karbala and the Department of English College of Education for Human Sciences Wasit University. The sample of the study is the students at the Department of English College of Education for Human Sciences Wasit University. Finally, it's concluded that item 2 got the highest weighted mean (4.68. 93%). Meanwhile, item 19 got the lowest weighted mean (2.34. 46%). Technology is like a double-edged knife, with positive and negative sides. The positive side is that technologies bring attractive education, while the negative side is when students are not able to use technologies correctly.

3.8. Recommendations

- 1- Governments are urged to assess the post-lockdown consequences to address future decisions with practical information
- 2- Governments should rethink existing educational systems.
- 3- Internet access should be provided to all populated places to help improve distant and online learning channels.
- 4- Digital technology needs to be integrated into the syllabus and curriculum.
- 5- Undergraduates are advised to acquire DLS.
- 6- Instructors are recommended to help students interpret, understand, and make meaning across technological media, such as emails, social networking, chats, and blogs.
- 7- Instructors and students should keep up to date, develop their own digital competencies, and understand how digital devices present information by their language.



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