

## DEVELOPING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT LEARNING SKILLS THROUGH ENHANCING DIGITAL LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the issue of developing students' independent learning skills by enhancing digital literacy in the process of teaching English. The study analyzes the effective use of online platforms and digital tools, critical evaluation of information, digital ethics, and online collaboration skills, as well as their impact on students' autonomous learning activities. The findings highlight that digital literacy not only improves language learning outcomes but also fosters students' self-directed learning, critical thinking, and lifelong learning competencies in higher education.*

**Keywords:** *digital literacy, independent learning, English language teaching, online platforms, critical thinking, digital technologies, higher education.*

**Introduction.** Today, students have access to a wide range of online platforms and digital tools for learning English. For example, platforms such as Coursera, edX, and FutureLearn offer specialized English language courses that allow learners to independently select materials according to their proficiency levels. In addition, resources such as YouTube, BBC Learning English, and TED Talks contribute significantly to the development of listening and comprehension skills. However, to fully benefit from these opportunities, students must be able to effectively manage digital technologies, critically

analyze information, and organize their independent learning processes efficiently [1].

**Main Part.** In modern education, digital literacy and independent learning skills are considered core competencies of higher education students [2]. In particular, the effective integration of digital technologies into English language teaching not only enhances students' language proficiency but also develops their capacity for autonomous learning.

Digital literacy is not limited to the ability to use technological devices; it also includes the skills to access, evaluate, and utilize digital information appropriately, ensure information security, and comply with ethical norms in digital environments. In the context of learning English, digital literacy opens new opportunities for students by enabling them to independently access global knowledge resources, engage with authentic materials in foreign languages, and develop language skills using contemporary methods. Therefore, digital literacy plays a crucial role not only in improving educational quality but also in increasing students' competitiveness in the global labor market [3].

The process of developing independent learning skills through enhancing students' digital literacy can be divided into several key stages. The first stage involves developing students' skills in effectively using digital platforms and applications. Teachers should introduce platforms such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Edmodo, Nearpod, and Wakelet during lessons. Through these platforms, students learn how to access learning materials, complete assignments, and actively participate in the learning process. Independent access to resources and information retrieval is essential at this stage.

The second stage focuses on developing students' critical information analysis skills. Not all information available on the Internet is reliable; therefore, students must learn to evaluate the credibility and academic value of

information sources. For example, information obtained from Wikipedia should be cross-checked with official or academic sources. When analyzing articles, blogs, or news texts in English, students not only learn vocabulary but also develop skills in identifying main ideas, analyzing arguments, and drawing independent conclusions.

The third stage involves creating independent projects and presentations using digital technologies. Platforms such as Canva, VoiceThread, Loom, and Wakelet enable students to design projects, prepare presentations, and create instructional videos in English. These activities enhance not only students' language fluency but also their creativity, technical competence, and self-expression skills.

The fourth stage emphasizes the development of online collaboration and social learning skills. Creating virtual groups, completing collaborative tasks, and working on joint projects contribute to effective English language learning. For instance, tools such as Trello and Microsoft Teams help students plan projects, distribute roles, and complete tasks collaboratively. During this process, students actively communicate in English and develop social and cooperative learning skills [4].

In addition, it is essential to teach students digital ethics. Issues such as data privacy, plagiarism avoidance, and appropriate online communication are integral components of digital literacy. Teachers should pay particular attention to these aspects, encouraging students to think independently and take responsibility for their work.

From this perspective, the development of digital literacy and independent learning skills not only enhances language learning efficiency but also strengthens students' ability to continuously update their knowledge and skills throughout their lives [5]. In the 21st century, digital and autonomous learning competencies are key factors for success in any professional field. Thus, integrating digital technologies into English language education

contributes not only to linguistic competence but also to students' digital culture and self-development capacity.

## **Digital Literacy and Independent Learning**

Digital literacy refers to the ability to use modern digital technologies and internet resources consciously, effectively, and responsibly. For students, it includes the ability to search for information using digital resources, analyze and filter data, comply with online safety and ethical standards, create digital projects and presentations, and collaborate effectively in online environments. Such literacy supports students' independent knowledge expansion, self-regulation, and critical thinking skills [6].

Currently, numerous online resources—such as electronic textbooks, video lessons, interactive applications, forums, and international courses—are available for learning English. Without sufficient digital literacy, students cannot fully utilize these opportunities. As a result, digital literacy enables students to independently seek knowledge, evaluate their learning outcomes, and plan their learning processes effectively.

## **Strategies for Developing Digital Literacy**

The following strategies are recommended for developing students' digital literacy and independent learning skills:

- Teaching students how to use digital platforms effectively in English language classes (Google Classroom, Padlet, Zoom);
- Developing skills for evaluating and analyzing online information and preventing plagiarism;
- Enhancing media and information literacy through critical analysis of news, blogs, and academic texts;
- Teaching digital ethics, including respect, privacy, and responsible online communication;

- Assigning independent digital projects that require students to apply digital tools autonomously.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, enhancing digital literacy in English language teaching plays a vital role in developing students' independent learning skills. Conscious and effective use of digital technologies encourages students to think independently, engage actively in the learning process, and continuously develop their knowledge and competencies. Organizing independent learning activities based on digital literacy strategies significantly improves students' language proficiency, autonomy, and readiness for lifelong learning.

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