NextGen Education Review Journal
eISSN: 2988-4047, Vol 2, No 1, 2024, pp 11-22

EXPLORING HIGHER EDUCATION TEACHERS' SELF-PERCEIVED DIGITALLITERACY AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR DIGITAL IDENTITY ON SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

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Article History:
Accepted January 2024;
Revised March 2024;
Approved March 2024.

Abstract: This study investigates the self-perceived digital literacy competencies of college English teachers and explores how these competencies shape their digital identities on social networking sites (SNSs). This research is considered important in an era where the integration of technology in education and the use of SNSs for professional and personal purposes are increasingly prevalent. Through a comprehensive examination of teachers' self-perceptions and practices on SNS, this study highlights the complex interplay between digital competencies and digital identity construction. Data were collected through in- depth interviews and observations on lecturers' social media content, which provided valuable insights into the role of digital literacy in educators' digital identity. Findings highlighted that although these teachers generally demonstrated moderate digital literacy, they were able to create and develop positive and professional identities on social media. These skills empowered them to engage effectively in online educational communities, interactions, and networks. In addition, the teachers also demonstrated digital competence, confidence, and awareness of their professional responsibilities.

Keywords: EFL teachers, digital literacy, digital identity, higher education, social networking sites

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic and expanding world of education, digital literacy become an essential aspect of the sustainable growth of educators (Nguyen & Habók, 2023; Wohlfart & Wagner, 2023). These competencies cover a wide range of skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of the digital world, including information literacy, media literacy, communication and collaboration skills, critical thinking, and cybersecurity awareness (Milenkova et al., 2019). Strong digital literacy skills are essential for educators as this is a requirement for 21st-century educators in a globalized and digitalized society (Falloon, 2020; Sánchez-Caballé et al., 2020).

Moreover, the emergence of social media has expanded into the educational realm. Online platforms have emerged as centers of social communication and interaction (Duong, 2020; Guidi, 2021). It has increased people's desire and behaviour for self-presentation (Cao et al., 2023). Among these platforms, Social Networking Sites (SNSs) are increasingly popular, and the rapid development of technology drives these platforms (Masrom et al., 2021). Within the SNSs, users are provided with a highly immersive interactive platform that encourages dialogue, exchange of ideas, and sharing of information (Ashraf et al., 2021). Furthermore, SNSs have evolved into the platform of choice for constructing virtual personas and influencing self-perception (Cao et al., 2023). Unsurprisingly, Social Networking Sites (SNS) play an essential role in maintaining and expanding the social identity of young people (Pegg et al., 2018).

Modern teachers are increasingly using digital technology such as Social Networking Sites (SNS) for a variety of purposes, including professional development, networking, communication, and self-presentation (Fuchs & Aguilos, 2023; Bruguera et al., 2019; Lowe-Calverley & Grieve, 2018; Marzulina et al., 2018). Mardiana (2021) emphasized that lecturers need digital knowledge, abilities, and skills to navigate this digital technology. It relates to the significant role of lecturers as university educators (Akayoğlu et al., 2020).

The growth of Social Networking Sites (SNS) has not only introduced new opportunities for learning and teaching. It also opens up opportunities to explore the expression of digital Identity (Barron et al., 2023). Routray (2019) emphasizes that digital identities play an important role in shaping a person's behaviour in cyberspace. It is worth noting that specific individuals might craft a distinct persona online, divergent from their offline existence. This phenomenon is clearly articulated by Synowiec (2022), who emphasizes that digital identity construction is an ongoing process in which individuals actively construct their self-presentation. This process suggests the existence of different motivational aspects in human behaviour. Examining the development of digital identities through Social Networking Sites (SNS) provides insights into how individuals choose to express various aspects of their identity, a decision that is often influenced by their sociocultural context (Khoshsabk, 2018).

Nevertheless, the comprehensive longitudinal study conducted by Taylor et al. (2023) highlights the lack of a thorough understanding of the multidirectional impact of online behaviours on one's sense of identity. Nazari and Seyri (2023) share the same knowledge gap and emphasize that, despite the growing research on teacher identity formation, the nuances of educators' online identities remain relatively unexplored. Moreover, Solmaz (2021) also emphasized that self-presentation on SNS deserves special attention as more research is needed to understand the extent to which our true selves are presented online.

Therefore, this study attempts to uncover how teachers in higher education perceive their digital literacy competencies and how these competencies contribute to the digital identity of teachers on social networking sites.

Digital Literacy, Teachers and Digital Identity

Digital Literacy

In the late 1990s, Paul Gilster (1997) introduced an innovative concept: 'digital literacy.' Gilster acknowledged that the internet's transformative power defined digital literacy as the "mastery of ideas, not merely keystrokes" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2008). Gilster notes that digital literacy is "the ability to understand and use information in various formats from various sources when presented through a computer" (Spires et al., 2018). Digital literacy involves acquiring essential skills through digital technologies, making it a social practice that includes reading and writing using digital tools. It includes accessing, using, analyzing, creating and sharing digital texts (Lendzhova & Vladislava, 2021).

An increasingly digital society must be educated to be technologically competent (Gisbert- Cervera & Caena, 2022). It means that people, including educators, must be enabled to develop digital competencies. In the European Qualifications Framework recommendations, 'competence' is the proven ability to use personal, social, and methodological knowledge, skills and abilities in work or learning situations and professional and personal development (Ala-muka, 2011). This study defines these competencies as technical skills people require when engaging with new media (Astuti, 2021).

Meanwhile, according to Lankshear and Knobel (2008), digitally literate people can navigate multiple media platforms efficiently. They have a strong understanding of choosing the most appropriate mode of expression to communicate specific information and excel at presenting content in a way that suits their target audience. This definition underscores the adaptability inherent in digital literacy, which allows individuals to tailor their media choices to the nature of the information they are disseminating and the preferences of their target audience. These abilities enable people to collaborate in social networks, pool knowledge collectively, navigate and negotiate multiple networks, and evaluate and reconcile contradictory information to complete desired tasks (Spires & Bartlett, 2012). Literacy practices refer to the social and cultural norms, structures, and actions shaping literacy events (Street, 2009). It is competencies and actions related to using digital technologies, such as searching for information, creating content, and communicating with others in digital media.

This study adopted Spires and Bartlett (2012) This study adopts Spires and Bartlett's (2012) model, which categorizes the digital literacy cognitive process into three main categories: finding and consuming digital content, creating digital content, and communicating digital content.

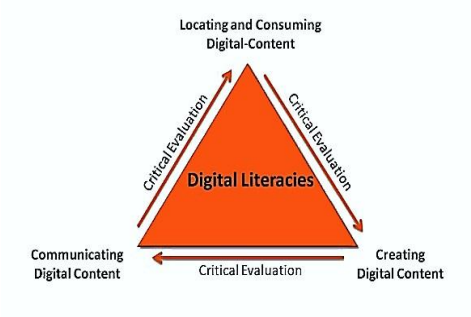

Figure 1. Digital Literacy Practice
Adapted from Spires & Bartlett (2012)

According to Spires, Locating and Consuming Digital Content encompasses the cognitive processes associated with correctly searching, finding and consuming digital information. This includes information search, internet research, assessing the authenticity of sources, and learning how to use digital content. On the other hand, Creating Digital Content focuses on the cognitive processes involved in creating digital material. This category includes skills such as content creation, commenting, publishing, digital media production, and other activities that include creating digital content. Meanwhile, Communicating Digital Material deals with the cognitive processes of sharing and engaging with digital material. Online communication, social media engagement, digital storytelling, and the capacity to express ideas and information to a digital audience are all required (Spires & Bartlett, 2012). These three categories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the cognitive aspects of digital literacy, encompassing the various skills and processes required to navigate and thrive in the digital era.

Teacher' Digital Literacy

In the Indonesian context, several studies have explored the digital literacy competencies of teachers. Among them are Soepriyanti et al. (2022), who revealed several issues related to differences in teachers' competencies in digital literacy, such as lack of internet access, absence of professional development and institutional support systems. Their findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to improve teachers' digital literacy competencies in rural areas. In addition, Musa et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of understanding the development of digital literacy in higher education in Indonesia, emphasizing its role in fostering lifelong learning among academics. Their research underscores the urgency for university teachers in Indonesia to cultivate solid digital literacy competencies, as these competencies are essential for producing digitally literate graduates. Furthermore, Nascimbeni (2018) contributed to this discourse by highlighting the significance of teacher training as a foundation for transforming educators into digitally literate people. These studies emphasize the critical need for addressing digital literacy among educators in Indonesia, not only for the benefit of teachers themselves but also for developing digitally competent graduates who can thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world.

Digital Identity

The notion of "digital identity" has arisen as a basis of modern people's online lives in today's quickly changing digital age. Social media users acquire digital identities by creating their profiles and representing themselves online with this Identity (Çöteli, 2019). According to Synowiec (2022), digital identity is a social identity that assumes that individual identity is a structure created by many social identifications with many social categories. Digital Identity, denoting a person's digital self-presentation, encompasses a range of information, attributes, and activities associated with their online presence and interactions. This notion closely intertwines with the emerging concept of "virtual reality," which represents conditional parameters such as social status, behaviour, and others' opinions (E.R., 2019).

In addition, Cameron and Grewe (2022) define digital identity as a unique identifier that, together with relevant attributes, is required in the context of a digital transaction to generate value. This identity is used consciously by people and, therefore, is always related to the self-presentation and self-categorization of individuals (Soldatova & Pogorelov, 2018). Social Identity theory by Hogg (1966) revealed that individuals construct social identities consisting of values, attitudes, and behavioural intentions based on their perceived membership in distinct and inclusive social groups, real and imagined (King'ara & Omukoba, 2021). In addition, Cover (2022), in his book entitled Identity and Digital Communication, also showed how identities are shaped and understood in the context of significant and ongoing shifts in online communication.

The complex intersection between digital identities and educators has attracted the attention of many researchers. For example, Li et al. (2023) conducted an in-depth case study investigating two Chinese Spanish teachers' digital identities. The study revealed a tapestry of digital identities adopted by teachers, which included roles such as curriculum innovator, vulnerable actor, accidental team collaborator, returning educator from abroad, and scientific researcher. In this context, educators' digital identities are influential in their professional realm and as potential role models for students. Engeness (2021) asserted that such digital identities could positively impact students' teaching-learning abilities and position educators as knowledge facilitators for students and their peers. Santoso et al. (Santoso et al., 2021) claimed that digital identities can reflect the image of educators and professionals, fostering an aura of expertise and dedication.

METHODOLOGY

To better capture the digital literacy competencies and digital identity of EFL lecturers in a rural area in Indonesia, this study adopted a case study method. According to Gomm et al. (2000) and Yin (2014), a case study effectively describes a phenomenon in detail in a real-world context. A case study is a qualitative design in which researchers explore a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals in depth (Creswell, 2014).

Participants and Context

This study was conducted at a private university in Palopo, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Palopo is a small city located about 253 km from Makassar city. The university where the participants worked was the largest private university in the region, with advanced technology and internet facilities.

A total of six English lecturers were the participants in this study. They were lecturers aged 28 to 40, with four women and two men. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants who fit the research criteria. Purposeful sampling helps the researcher choose

information sources that can help answer the research question (Shaheen et al., 2019). The criteria for selecting participants included being English language lecturers for at least five years, being actively involved in social media like Facebook, Instagram, Telegram or TikTok, and being willing to participate in this study. The following is the classification of participants in this study.

Table 2. Participants Classification

Participants Code	Teaching Period	Age	Gender	SNSs Platforms
L 1	10 years	40	Female	Facebook, Instagram
L 2	5 years	28	Female	Facebook, Instagram, Telegram
L 3	10 years	35	Female	Facebook, Instagram, TikTok
L 4	7 years	30	Female	Facebook, Instagram,
L 5	9 years	37	Male	Facebook, Instagram, Telegram
L 6	6 years	36	Male	Facebook, Instagram, Telegram

Data Source

The main focus of this research is lecturers' views on their digital literacy competencies and their contribution to their digital identities. For this purpose, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews and social media observation. An in-depth interview is designed to clearly understand a participant's perspective on a research topic. In an in-depth interview, the interviewee is considered the expert, and the interviewer is the student (Mack et al., 2005). The semi-structured interviews were conducted six times through mobile phones and WhatsApp. The interview instrument was structured as a list of themes by adopting the Digital Literacy Category by Spires and Bartlett (2012), categorizing cognitive processes related to digital literacy into three main categories: finding and consuming, creating, and communicating digital content (see Figure 1). The interviews were not conducted on the same day due to the participants' busy schedules. Multiple interviews took about 30 to 60 minutes for each participant. Before the interviews, interview guides and informed consent were sent to the participants' students (Mack et al., 2005). In addition, to see the effect of lecturers' digital literacy on their digital identities, researchers observed their social media, Facebook, as the platform participants use most often. We took several screenshots of content shared, liked, posts, comments, and groups or communities that represented their engagement as educators on social media. This document data helps to support opinions and convince researchers of the information provided in the interview.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected over three months in June to September of 2023. Data collection began with the first semi-structured interview in early June 2023, followed by six subsequent discussions until the end of July. After the interview, the researcher continued observing the participants' social media. Observations were conducted on six participants to see the activities and content they shared on their social media. In this case, the researcher observed and took screenshots of data from the participants' activities on Facebook in the last three months.

Therefore, document data, namely screenshots of participants' activities on social media, were collected. In observing social media, the researcher made small notes to help with in-depth analysis. All data were translated and transcribed by the same researcher, and to improve content

validation, the participants proofread all transcripts. Data analysis then involves an iterative process using three activities simultaneously: condensation, display and inference, and verification of conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). The coding scheme was revised inductively as new themes and codes emerged from the data as the analysis progressed. From this data analysis, the researcher described teachers' views on digital literacy competencies and their impact on professional identities developed on social media.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The data for this study is divided into two major themes, namely, the views of university English teachers regarding their digital literacy skills and the digital identity they displayed as educators on their social media platforms. The data was collected from in-depth interviews with six lecturers at a private university in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The researcher divided the findings into three categories based on the Digital Literacy category by Spires and Bartlett (2012): locating and consuming, creating digital content, and communicating digital content.

Locating and Consuming Digital Content

Locating and Consuming Digital Content covers the cognitive processes associated with correctly searching, finding and consuming digital information. it includes information search, internet research, assessing the authenticity of sources, and learning how to use digital content.

Based on the interviews, all participants claimed to understand digital literacy, and they categorized their literacy at a moderate level. The reasons were that they only used commonly used applications and did not pay much attention to the development of digital technology, such as new software and AI. Lecturer L2 said she learned about ChatGPT from her students, so she looked up what ChatGPT was and began to understand AI, which is currently popular in education. Researchers also asked what digital technology devices they use daily, and respondents mentioned cell phones, laptops and tablets. They also said most use digital applications such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, TikTok, GDrive, Google, Google Classroom, Google Form and digital dictionary applications.

Moreover, for primary information seeking, participants admitted that they seek information primarily from trusted websites like news or government. They generally use Google as the leading search engine to get information and clarify news that they might get on their social media homepage. Participants L2 and L4 said that whenever they see news or information shared on Facebook, they usually look at the news source to make sure whether it is from a trusted source such as a government website or television. If not, they do not trust the news; they will search further on Google if it is critical. However, when asked about copyright, four of the six participants admitted that they only share things considered important to them and their students on social media, such as materials related to English language learning or the courses they teach.

Participant L5, a lecturer who also teaches English at the Faculty of Informatics, admitted that he knows about it and sometimes writes the author's source if he posts a quote. As he says in the interview, "I like to make posts like famous quotes or hadith. Usually, I'll write the name of the person who made the quote." But he admitted that he did it without thinking about copyright.

Regarding privacy safety on social media, participants said they knew how to manage privacy on social media. Since their audience is primarily students and colleagues, almost all posts they make are set only to be seen by friends. Participant L1 said, "On Facebook, I am only friends with my family, fellow lecturers, students, and friends from the training I attended, so my account

settings are set to 'Friends only'. But sometimes I change it to 'Public' if I think the information, I share deserves to be known by everyone." In addition, all participating lecturers claimed to be aware of digital information's influence on society. Therefore, they tend to share information responsibly.

Creating Digital Content

Creating Digital Content focuses on the cognitive processes involved in creating digital material. This category includes skills such as content creation, commenting, publishing, digital media production, and other activities that include creating digital content.

Regarding digital content that participants create, share and like on their social media accounts, six themes emerged from the participants' responses they were academic or professional activities, the English language, self-development, religion, hobbies and interests, and daily activities. These themes showed that most participants shared content relevant to their profession as professional educators. When the researcher asked about the content they often post and share on their social media, participant L3 said, "I often share photos of activities on campus, when teaching and when attending workshops or seminars on my social media." The reason for this was for personal documentation, campus and department promotion and also to motivate students.

Moreover, it is known that all participants are active on social media for various reasons, including personal and professional reasons. They also have multiple social media such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Telegram and YouTube. Participant L6, who is also a YouTuber, admitted that he often creates content related to journals and research methods in his channel. Another participant, L3, mainly utilized TikTok to generate content for English teaching, classroom learning, and other activities on campus. The following screenshot from participant L6 illustrates an example of the content he shared on his Facebook account.

Communicating Digital Content.

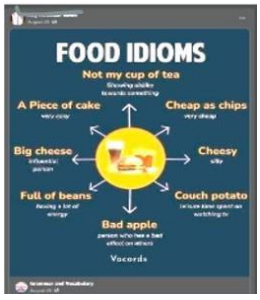

Figure 2. Social Media content of the lecturers

Communicating Digital Content deals with the cognitive processes of sharing and engaging with digital content. Online communication, social media engagement, digital storytelling, and the capacity to express ideas and information to a digital audience are all required. Social media engagement can positively impact students who follow the lecturers' accounts. When the researcher asked about this, all participants argued that they usually share ideas and opinions with students and fellow lecturers through social media. They also did not hesitate to give likes if they found posts of fellow lecturers and students that they considered good and positive. Besides that, all participants admitted to joining some local and national professional communities and followed expert accounts and professors that they recognized. The following screenshots from participants' L4 and L5 accounts showed the professional groups they follow and like.

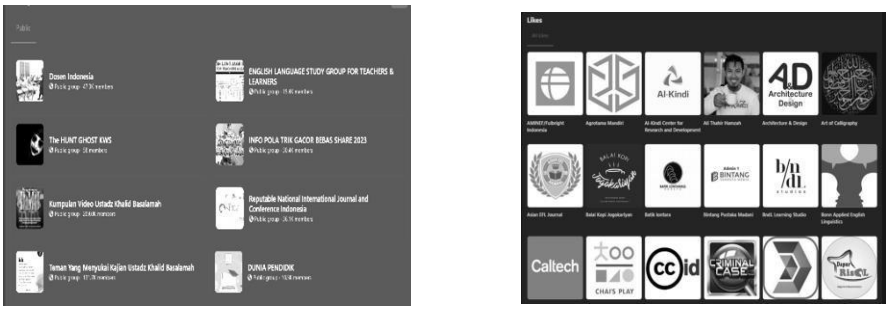

Figure 3. Social Media activity of lecturers (Groups and Likes Pages)

In the teaching and learning process, lecturers use Learning Management Systems (LMS) provided by the campus and Google Classroom to communicate with students. Although they admitted they were confused about how to use it for the first time, they got used to it with time and training. In addition, all lecturers said they create groups for students to discuss academic matters outside of class, such as WhatsApp and Telegram groups.

Participants were asked whether their profiles on social media represented their professional identity as educators. All respondents answered yes. Participant L2 said, "…I wrote on my profile that I am a lecturer". Participant L6 added, "I think people know I am an educator just by looking at the content I share". However, when they were asked further about the type of content they most often create, participant L3 said, "I usually make videos if it's on TikTok, photos if it's to share on Instagram, and mostly text if it's on Facebook". Communicating digital content also deals with the use of multimedia. Respondents said they often incorporate multimedia elements such as videos, podcasts and interactive presentations to make their teaching more engaging and memorable. However, to create their teaching videos, some lecturers admitted that they still have difficulties with video editing.

Discussion

This study explores how university English teachers perceive their digital literacy competencies and digital identities as educators on social media platforms. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with six lecturers at a private university in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The findings of this study are divided into three categories based on the Digital Literacy category by Spires and Bartlett (2012). They locate and consume digital content, create digital content, and communicate it.

On the self-perceived digital literacy competencies of university English teachers, it was revealed that the participants generally showed a moderate level of understanding. All participants rated their digital skills positively but felt that they had not honed their digital literacy enough due to a lack of training and limited time to learn more about the latest technology, so they tended to use the technology they had mastered over the years. Overall, these EFL lecturers were able to identify and critically verify the information received. This aligns with Su's (2023) point that teachers need to be equipped with digital competence, a prerequisite for critical thinking, and the ability to identify and verify the truth of information. In addition, the participants are young lecturers who are millennials who have been familiar with technology since college. As Palacios-Hidalgo and Huertas-Abril (2022) mentioned, 21st-century EFL teachers are assumed to be well-trained in digital literacy.

One of this study's key findings is that lecturers with adequate digital literacy tend to project a more positive and professional digital identity. These skills empower lecturers to engage effectively with students and colleagues in digital environments. In addition, these skills enable lecturers to participate in professional groups and communities where they can share teaching content and insights. Active participation in these professional networks enriches lecturers' knowledge and contributes to their standing within the academic community. In addition, a critical aspect of building a digital identity as a lecturer is that they set up social media profiles with an educational focus. In addition, participants also maintain a cohesive and professional online presence to establish themselves as knowledge agents in their field and connect with a broader audience.

During the interviews with the lecturers, it was clear that the participants had a high level of digital competence, confidence and awareness of their professional responsibilities. These qualities have a significant impact on how they present themselves online. The confidence to navigate digital platforms and engage in meaningful online discourse is crucial in this digital age. In addition, their awareness of professional responsibility underscores the importance of maintaining an ethical and credible digital identity, as they recognize their influence on students and the broader education community. This research aligns with Hafsa's (2019) statement that a teacher's professional identity is closely related to their self-efficacy, confidence and competence. A strong digital identity can support these attributes, enhancing educators' ability to make informed curricular and pedagogical decisions. Educators can build trust and credibility through digital identity and catalysed professional growth and development.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study explored university English teachers' digital literacy competencies and digital identities. The findings highlight that although these teachers generally exhibit moderate digital literacy, they created and developed positive and professional identity on social media. These skills empowered them to engage effectively in online educational communities and networks. The teachers also demonstrated digital competence, confidence and awareness of their professional responsibilities. In the era of digital education, the combination of digital skills and identity plays a crucial role in shaping the future of higher education. Therefore, the researcher suggests further in-depth research in different contexts related to teachers' digital identity and literacy in Indonesia.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the institution supporting this research so it can be carried out.This poetry experiment was supported by the Indonesian Education Scholarship (BPI) 2022 by The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

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