Multidisciplinary Approaches to Media Literacy: Research and Practices

媒介素养的跨学科研究与实践

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Media Literacy in the Context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching

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Introduction

The goal of this research is to investigate teachers' perspectives on and the challenge they face in designing a 21st-century classroom environment by incorporating media literacy to meet the needs of digital natives. Digital natives are those who were born in an era when technology plays an important role in humans' life. They have different needs compared to other generations in terms of learning environment. Their way of thinking and socializing is influenced by the environment and culture in which they are raised (Prensky, 2001). Thus, a special classroom environment is crucial for supporting what constitutes learning based on their way of thinking (Weade, 1992). This means that teachers should be able to design a 21st-century learning environment to facilitate these digital natives in acquiring 21st-century skills and literacy.

The United States and other countries have increasingly recognized that 21st-century knowledge and skills not only build upon core-content knowledge, but also include information and communication skills, thinking and problem-solving skills, interpersonal and self-directional skills, and the skills to utilize 21st-century tools, such as information and communication technologies (Pearlman, 2006).

As teachers of foreign languages, we are now teaching a generation that is privileged in their knowledge of technology, mass media, and the Internet. This generation has the longest media history, considering they have had access to a wider range of different kinds of media and technology tools. As Egbert and Neville (2015) noted, although student exposure to content of the Internet is unavoidable, highlighting values that are important for them should be crucial. As language teachers, in this case EFL teachers, our priority is to enable students to

read, write, listen, and speak in their target language. In that connection, Egbert and Neville (2011) further argued that language learners need additional language and literacy skills to survive in the global world. One of the most crucial 21st-century skills is media literacy.

Given the fact that media literacy is crucial for 21st-century learners, EFL teachers should seriously consider using TV, the Internet, radio, and other technologies in their 21st-century classroom. They should make their students media-literate. Our goals are to investigate teachers' knowledge and understanding of media literacy and the 21st-century learning environment and to find out the challenges faced by EFL teachers in incorporating media literacy into the 21st-century EFL classroom.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding media literacy

Media literacy can be formally defined as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate media in a variety of ways" (Aufderheide, 1993). Livingstone (2004) also defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyzes, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts" (p. 2).

In the teaching and learning context, media literacy can "generally be defined as having the ability and skills to critically interpret, analyze, and produce media" (Egbert & Neville, 2015, p.178) and also can be seen as a call for students to challenge "what they see, not as right or wrong, but as being open to interpretation" (Quinlisk, 2003, p.35).

A more comprehensive and practical definition of media literacy has been summarized by Hendriyani and Guntarto (2014) as well as Guntarto (2014) as follows:

Media literacy means educating people to choose and use the media wisely, without asking them to stop using the media.

Media literacy is the practice of consuming media in a smart way.

Media literacy is the ability to avoid the negative effects of the media.

Media literacy means having an understanding of the media and its contents.

Media literacy is the ability to use media and information technology to obtain certain economic benefits.

Media Awareness Network (2011) as cited in Hendriyani and Guntarto (2014) expanded the definition of media literacy to cover digital media such as computers, cell phones, and the Internet, including hardware and software. The fast development of Internet access is the main reason that EFL teachers should have a certain level of technology literacy to support media literacy in teaching 21st-century learners.

The 21st century learner

When my daughter was three years old back in 2009, she asked me to buy her a laptop. For my generation, this sounds ridiculous; however, my daughter belongs to the so-called *millennial generation* or the generation of *digital natives*, who were born and raised in a technology-intensive era. Devices such as Laptop, iPod, iPad, iPhone, and other technology tools are no longer categorized as strange tools for them.

There is tremendous evidence showing that today's students, who were born after 1982, have a different relationship with information and learning due to the fast development of information and technology and better access to the Internet. One of the studies was conducted by Oblinger (2004). It shows that by the age of 21, students would have spent 10,000 hours playing video games, sent 200,000 emails, watched 20,000 hours of television, spent 10,000 hours on their cell phone, but less than 5,000 hours reading. This study also shows, based on the trend, that children aged 6 and under spend 2.01 hours per day playing outdoor, but 1.58 hours using computers. They spend only 40 minutes reading daily or ask being read to. It also shows that 48% of these children have used a computer. Further, Oblinger suggested that the intense interaction between children and technology has significantly affected the way they learn and interact with their environment.

Indonesian children at the beginning of the 1990s had limited access to what is called electronic media. At that time the new media that could be accessed was in the form of printed materials such as newspapers and magazines, radio, video games, and a limited number of TV stations. This condition changed drastically in the following two decades. In 2011, Indonesian families watched more than ten national TV stations and over a hundred TV channels which were available on cable TV and satellite dish (Hendriyani & Guntarto, 2014). Nowadays, children in Indonesia are getting media information by browsing the Internet, Facebook, YouTube, and using other online applications. The latest information can come to them on touching a button with a tip of their fingers. This recent fast development of technology inevitably changes the way of teaching. Incorporating technology tools and media literacy becomes a requirement for teaching.

Teaching 21st century learners

The use of technology becomes an urgent issue considering that students nowadays are born in an era when technology has become part of all aspects of human life, especially education. Children nowadays are born as digital natives. As digital natives, children are thinking, learning, and socializing in different ways. Their way of thinking and socializing is influenced by the environment and culture in which they are raised (Prensky, 2001). Thus, a special class-

room environment is crucial for supporting what constitutes learning based on their way of thinking (Weade, 1992).

The integration of technology into the teaching and learning process is essential for the digital natives. The classroom needs to provide an environment and atmosphere that allow students to create and construct their knowledge, share and collaborate with their peers who are not only from their in-class group, but also from around the world (Warschauer, 2003).

The use of technology provides resources and facilities for learners to both construct and apply their knowledge. They are able to create, edit, and share content. With the use of technology in the classroom, students are able to choose an environment where they feel most comfortable to study. They should always be provided with both an individual and group-learning space. Providing both an individual and group-learning space is a gateway to the behavioral tendency of human beings to work as an individual or as a group (Prensky, 2001). In this research, the integration of technology in the classroom setting places an emphasis on computer use in language learning.

A previous study conducted by Machmud and Basalama (2014) shows that teachers are mostly aware that they are teaching digital natives; that they do not have a specific level of technology literacy in teaching digital natives; and that they do not feel threatened to teach the digital natives. However, they are fully aware of the importance of training for them to acquire a specific level of technology literacy and knowledge to design a specific learning environment for their students.

21st century learning environment

The social constructivist perspective views classrooms as dynamic, evolving and a differentiated communication environment. The use of technology provides resources and facilities for learners to both construct and apply their knowledge. They are able to create, edit, and share contents. Most of all, with the use of technology in the classroom, students are able to choose an environment where they feel most comfortable to study. They are always provided with both an individual and group-learning space. Providing an individual and group-learning space is a gateway to the behavioral tendency of human beings to work as individuals or a group. As a consequence, schools nowadays move from "telling/lecturing" to the pedagogy of "kids teaching themselves with the teacher's guidance" (Prensky, 2008).

A special learning environment is crucial for supporting what constitutes learning based on digital natives' way of thinking. Schools must be able to engage 21st-century students and enable them to acquire and master 21st-century skills. The integration of technology into the teaching and learning process is essential for the digital natives. The classroom has to pro-

vide an environment and atmosphere that allow students to create, construct their knowledge, share, and collaborate with their peers who are not only from their in-class group, but also people from around the world. Creating this special environment is a challenge to teachers who are not digital natives themselves.

Technology integration in 21st century classroom

Technology exists everywhere, touching almost every part of our lives, our communities, and our homes. Unfortunately, most schools lag far behind when it comes to integrating technology into the instructional context. Many people are just starting to explore the real potential technological possibilities for teaching and learning. If it is properly used, technology can help students acquire the skills they need to survive in a complex, highly technological knowledge-based economy (Edutopia Team, 2008, as cited in Machmud, 2011).

Learning through projects while equipped with technological equipment allows students to be intellectually challenged while providing them with a realistic picture of what the modern office looks like. Through projects, students acquire and refine their analysis and problem-solving skills as they work individually and in teams to find, process, and synthesize information they find online. The numerous resources in the online world also provide each classroom with more interesting, diverse, and current learning materials. The Web connects students to experts in the real world and provides numerous opportunities for expressing understanding through images, sound, and text. As an added benefit, with technology tools and a project-learning approach, students are more likely to stay engaged and on-task, reducing behavioral problems in the classroom (Edutopia Team, 2008, as cited in Machmud, 2011).

Technology also changes the way teachers teach, offering educators effective ways to reach different types of learners and to assess student understanding through multiple means. It also enhances the relationship between teacher and student. When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach. "Technology helps make teaching and learning more meaningful and fun" (Edutopia Team, 2008, para. 6, as cited in Machmud, 2011).

Methodology

This research used qualitative protocol, with interview, observation, and document analysis as instruments of collecting data. We have purposively selected 25 English teachers from various school districts who teach in various grades, and who agreed to participate in this research. The participants consisted of 17 EFL teachers who teach in middle school and 8

EFL teachers who teach in high school. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 13 years teaching English as a foreign language. In the presentation of the findings of this research, the participants are addressed by using pseudonyms for the sake of their confidentiality.

Results

It is interesting to find that of the 25 participants of this research, 4 have never heard the term 'media literacy"; however, these teachers admitted that they frequently used media in the classroom, even though it was limited to Powerpoint presentations. Therefore, we concluded that even though they might not be familiar with the term "media literacy," it does not necessarily mean that they do not know or have never used media in their teaching.

The EFL teachers' understanding of media literacy

The participants of this research were asked to explain their own understanding of media literacy. It emerged that some of the participants showed a good understanding of it. The definitions given by the participants are as follows:

Most participants defined media literacy in a similar way to the definition given by Livingstone (2004), who defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages across a variety of contexts" (p. 19). Teacher 16 defines media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, and evaluate the content message from media". This definition echoed the definition from Teacher 14 who also defined media literacy as "the ability to access, analyze, understand, and deliver the content message of media such as television, radio, newspapers and online media." Teacher 23 defined media literacy as "… the ability to manage the information or messages from several media such as magazines, newspapers, radio, television as well as Internet-based media to develop individual skills and knowledge." Teacher 21 stated that media literacy is "the ability to analyze media and to be aware of the importance of media from various sources in acquiring wider and more qualified insight."

Another teacher who defined media literacy as something related with the ability to analyze different kinds of media is Teacher 15. He said,

"Media literacy is our ability and point of view in accessing information from mass media effectively and efficiently such as from newspapers, television, or radio, as well as from online media such as the Internet. In terms of getting information, we will be able to sort which one has a positive impact that we can use and which one has negative impact that we should avoid using."

Another participant defined media literacy as the ability to criticize the mass media. This was mentioned by Teacher 9 who stated that media literacy is "the ability to criticize the content of media or to gain an understanding of recent events." She further argued that "... as an educator, we must have an ability to access media, to analyze the content of media ... to criticize the mass media, and to write our own message in different forms and kinds." Teacher 20 further argued that media literacy is the ability to not only criticize the content of media, but also, most importantly, develop "a control towards the development of media, especially media that is related to the development of technology and communication."

Among those who had never heard of media literacy, participants tended to define media literacy as tools. It can be seen from their definition, which is as follows:

"I think media literacy is a media that can provide information to help students know previously unknown information and to help teachers teach English" (Teacher 18); "media literacy is the use of different kinds of media that can be a reference in the teaching and learning process as well as in the process of preparing teaching materials" (Teacher 17); "I think media literacy is a group of several media which is used in the instructional process in the classroom" (participant 3).

Some other participants even directly built a definition which is related to the use of media in instructional setting, especially in language learning. It can be seen in the following definition: "Media literacy is instructional media which is text-based; it is useful for increasing reading comprehension and writing" (Teacher 12); "media literacy is media that can be used in teaching language skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking" (Teacher 2).

The other interesting findings from the interview are that the participants defined media literacy as not only the ability to understand and analyze the content message from different kinds of media, but also to deliver and transfer the content message of the media. "Media literacy is the ability to use media to communicate his/her idea to the audience; it can be computer-based such as audiovisual media (Video), merely audio such as MP3 sound files, and visual only such as figures, charts, flash cards, etc." (Teacher 19); and "media literacy is a way to transfer science and knowledge through media" (Teacher 13); "In order to facilitate delivering messages and information, one way is to use mass media; however, mass media can be positive and also negative...I think media literacy is one form of people's concern towards the negative effect of media" (Teacher 11).

To sum up, the rest of the participants defined media literacy as something to do with the mastery, use, awareness, and ability to understand media to fulfill our needs. It can also be concluded that media literacy is the mastery of and the use of media to maximize the learning and mastering of language. It can be electronic media as well as printed media.

EFL teachers' perspective on the importance of media literacy in EFL teaching

The importance of media literacy in language learning is crucial. In the field of English as Foreign Language Teaching, media literacy can be used as the source of authentic language, which is important in learning a second or foreign language. It can also be used as a tool for learning content messages and hidden messages of different kinds of mass media. Media can provide images of different people, things, places, beliefs, and values. Teachers should be aware of this. Thus, understanding media literacy is indispensable for teachers to guide their students, who might come from different cultural backgrounds, in acquiring benefit from different kinds of media.

Having to learn the importance of media literacy for EFL teachers, we asked the participants of this research their opinion of the importance of media literacy in EFL teaching. The teachers' answers to this question are mostly similar. Most of them believe that understanding media literacy is important to EFL teachers because "nowadays students highly depend on different kinds of media" (Teacher 25).

In conclusion, the participants' answers in this section the importance of media literacy as a source of teaching materials and it as the tools to facilitate the instructional process.

EFL teachers' understanding of 21st century skills and literacy

To be able to design a 21st-century classroom, teachers should have knowledge of what constitutes 21st-century skills and literacy. Based on this notion, we asked the participants about their knowledge and understanding of 21st-century skills and literacy.

There is a shocking fact from the findings that shows that more than half of the total number of participants had no knowledge of 21st-century skills and literacy. Only 8 participants explained their understanding of those skills and literacy, whereas the rest of the participants, 17 teachers, answered that they did not understand or had never heard about 21st-century skills and literacy.

Those 17 teachers were most of the time hesitating during the interview. They said that they were not sure about their answer because of their lack of understanding of 21st-century skills and literacy. Some of the teachers explained 21st-century skills and literacy as something related to the digital and technology era (Teacher 17); while another teacher explained it as getting accurate technology-based information (such as that from the Internet, smart phones, and other digital media). This means that accessing information is not merely from mass media such as TV, radio, and newspapers (Teacher 16). The acquired information should also be managed and filtered well to get its full benefit; thus the ability to manage information in the 21st century is important so that the information can be used wisely (Teacher 11).

EFL teachers' perspective on the 21st century classroom design

In this research, we asked the teachers to mention any kind of media that they thought important to be provided in a 21st-century classroom to help their digital native students. We prompted them to mention as many as they could think. Some of the answers are mostly similar, as predicted, but some are surprisingly new. The following is the list of media that they think should be in a 21st-century classroom. The items on the list are ranked according to the frequency of them mentioned by all the participants.

The media	Frequency of mentions by participants
LCD Projector	16
Internet/wi-fi	14
Laptop	13
Computer	10
Speaker	8
TV	3
Computer tablet	3
Electricity	3
Comfortable classroom	3
Electronic/online dictionary	3
White board	2
Video player	2
Smart phone	2
Mini library	2
Smart board	2
Textbooks	2
Headphone/earphone	2
Voice Recorder	1
Power point	1
Video game	1
Digital music player	1
Radio	1
Professional teacher	1
Gallery	1
Tape recorder	1

The media	Frequency of mentions by participants
Mp3 or MP4 player	1
Chart	1
Marker	1
Paper	1
Light chairs that can be moved easily	1
Trash can	1
Students' work sheets	1
Printer	1

The challenge in designing 21st century EFL classroom

During the interview process we learned that most of the teachers who participated in this research did not have previous knowledge of what constituted 21st-century skills and literacy, which is obviously needed in designing a 21st-century classroom or learning environment. However, that did not discourage us from asking a further question about the challenge they face or will face in designing the 21st-century classroom. Their answers are summarized as follows:

The classroom

The availability of the classroom itself becomes a challenge for EFL teachers in designing a 21st-century classroom. The classroom will be mostly used for different subjects; thus, it is difficult to design based on the needs of digital natives in learning English as a foreign language (Teacher 24). Other teachers complained about the comfort of the classroom, saying the classes are mostly too small and humid due to the large number of students, which ranges from 30 to 35 in one class (Teacher 25, Teacher 16, and Teacher 15).

The teaching facilities

Providing teaching facilities is another challenge faced by EFL teachers in designing the 21st-century classroom. With their small salaries, teachers are not able to provide their own technological tools and equipment; thus they can only hope that the government somehow will provide laptops and LCD projectors to help them teach the digital natives (teacher 17 and Teacher 14).

The teachers' media and technology literacy

The participants specifically mentioned that their lack of media and technology literacy can be a burden in their attempt to design a 21st-century learning environment (Teacher 21 and Teacher 19). Teacher 21 claims "teachers must not be technology-illiterate" because without this knowledge teachers will face difficulties in translating and transferring what constitutes 21st-century skills and literacy into a 21st-century learning environment.

The Infrastructures

Having decent Internet access is the main requirement in designing the 21st-century classroom. "As long as a decent Internet connection is provided in each classroom, then everything will be running well" (Teacher 20).

Unfortunately, the availability of a decent Internet connection will be useless if the supply of electricity is not stable (Teacher 20). Blackouts that often happen in some areas usually shut down the whole process of using sophisticated technology in an instructional context.

Conclusion

Integrating media literacy into a 21st-century classroom design is important, considering that students nowadays can access a wide range of various media. What they need is the ability to explore, analyze, and use content messages from media. As language teachers, we can utilize media literacy to choose appropriate teaching materials because it provides "authentic language," which is necessary for learning a second or foreign language. This notion prompted us to conduct this research in the first place.

Based on the findings of this research, some important conclusions can be drawn: first, even though most teachers in this research did not have previous knowledge of media literacy, it does not necessarily mean that they did not use any kind of media in teaching; that fact also cannot represent their perspectives on the importance of media literacy in EFL teaching.

Secondly, a large number of teachers in this research did not have an adequate comprehension of what constitutes 21st-century skills and literacy. This eventually affected their ability in designing a 21st-century classroom which integrated teachers' media literacy into the teaching and learning process.

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CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

This certifies that

Karmila Machmud, Ph.D

presented paper entitled

Digital Natives"

"Media Literacy in a 21st Century Classroom Design: A Challenge to EFL Teachers to Teach the

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Alice Y. L. LEE, PhD

Co-Chair of the Conference