

E-PORTFOLIOS AND DIGITAL LITERACY: A POWERFUL COMBINATION FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The paper was aimed at exploring the implications of e-portfolios and *Padlet* on the digital literacy development of ELLs. A qualitative approach under the case study design was implemented along with the use of classroom observations, interview sessions, and documented study served as the instruments to collect the data. The findings revealed that the ELL students who implemented e-portfolios using *Padlet* found that the students made considerable development in their digital literacy skills. They achieved proficiency in the use of digital tools and technologies, improved their communication and cooperation abilities, gained the capacity to produce and spread content via digital platforms, and strengthened their critical thinking and reflection skills. The study indicated that e-portfolios and *Padlet* can be helpful tools for assisting ELLs in developing the digital literacy skills required to succeed in the 21st-century classroom. IT implied that the teachers might consider giving ELLs the chance to use e-portfolios and *Padlet* to advance their digital literacy.

Keywords: digital literacy; e-portfolio; English Language Learners

A. INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital literacy skills take an essential role, students need to be more equipped with the knowledge and skills to use digital tools and technologies effectively and responsibly. Researchers have defined digital literacy in English Language Learners (ELLs) as the ability to use digital tools and technology to access, assess, produce, and share information in the context of language acquisition (Ganapathy et al., 2015; Hafner, 2014; Ikaningrum & Sarwanti, 2021; Julien, 2017; Mantiri et al., 2019). Additionally, critical thinking, reflective practice, and functional skills with technology are all part of digital literacy skills.

However, several issues, including limited exposure to digital literacy teaching, lack of access to technology, and language barriers, make it difficult for many ELLs to develop digital literacy skills. Concerning this situation, e-portfolios appear to be a useful tool for helping ELLs develop digital literacy skills (Thang et al., 2012). They provide an opportunity for ELLs to practice using digital tools and technology, reflect on their learning, and share their work with others (Gikandi, 2019; Großböck, 2012; Harun et al., 2021; Karami et al., 2018; Thang

et al., 2012). E-portfolios can also assist ELLs in developing critical thinking and reflective skills by encouraging them to consider their learning objectives, progress, and challenges.

Furthermore, the rapid development of technologies in teaching platforms has supported teachers in fostering digital literacy skills among ELLs through the utility of e-portfolios. Padlet is one of the free and easy-to-use web-based tools for creating e-portfolios (Zaidi, 2019). Padlet users may create and publish interactive boards with text, images, videos, links, and other kinds of material (Defilippi et al., 2020; Piniuta, 2019; Puspita & A. Hasyim, 2022). Padlet also integrates easily with other educational applications and resources like Google Classroom and Google Drive.

This paper further investigated Padlet's potential as a helpful tool for implementing e-portfolios in language learning to improve digital literacy skills among English Language Learners (ELLs). The study intended to determine whether Padlet might be utilized as an e-portfolio in language learning, with a particular focus on students at the madrasah tsanawiyah level. Furthermore, the study attempted to explore how Padlet might empower students by promoting their digital literacy skills in the context of language learning.

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital Literacy Skills in Language Education

In the modern digital era, language teachers must provide students with the digital literacy skills they require to succeed. According to Mantiri et al. (2019), digital literacy includes more than simply computer usage, emphasizing the importance of fundamental training in this sector for language teachers. Hafner (2014) and Hafner et al. (2015) investigated the impact of technology on language learning, focusing on learners' increasing requirements in the digital era and emerging online environments for learning a new language. Under a similar topic, Ikaningrum and Sarwanti, (2021) investigated the various aspects of digital literacy, including cultural and social context understanding, critical thinking, reflective practice, and functional abilities using digital technology. Ganapathy et al. (2015) studied ESL students' digital literacy practices, emphasizing their ability to utilize technology wisely in learning contexts and emphasizing the need to establish effective digital literacy skills for educational objectives. Thus, digital literacy skills are essential for language learners in the digital age, and language teachers play a vital role in helping their students to develop these skills.

E-portfolios and Digital Literacy

E-portfolios have emerged as a promising tool for language learners to improve their writing skills and develop digital literacy skills. E-portfolios, according to researchers, can be an effective tool for improving digital literacy skills among language learners. What is meant by e-portfolio is an organized compilation of student work that includes the three crucial components that should be taken into account namely gathering, considering, and selecting. (Kwak & Yin, 2018; Subiana et al., 2022). Thang et al. (2012) discovered, for example, that creating e-portfolios helped Malaysian undergraduates in improving their computer and writing skills. Mapundu and Musara, 2019 discovered that e-portfolios assisted entrepreneurship students in improving their learning experiences, particularly in developing their entrepreneurial abilities. Thus, E-portfolios can be utilized to improve competence-based learning and core competencies in EFL learners, such as digital literacy (Gikandi, 2019; Sarac et al., 2022). They can also assist students in becoming more motivated and successful writers as well.

Padlet in English Language Teaching

Padlet, an attractive online tool, has grown as an essential online resource for English language learners. It can assist students in developing digital literacy and collaborative learning skills, both of which are necessary for academic achievement and beyond. Padlet's application in English language instruction is supported by research. Padlet has been shown to be useful for English writing (Arif et al., 2020; Defilippi et al., 2020; Puspita & A. Hasyim, 2022; Zaidi, 2019) while (Alastal et al., 2022) indicated its usefulness in teaching speaking skills. While some limitations have been identified, these studies demonstrate Padlet's potential for improving English language learning. Overall, it can be seen that Padlet is a promising tool for English language learners to gain the skills required to develop in the digital world.

Padlet as an Electronic Portfolio

Given much attention stated that an e-portfolio is crucial in integrating digital skills, Padlet appears as a promising online tool that might serve as an e-portfolio for ELLs. Researchers have highlighted its use as a digital platform for students to share their work and engage in peer assessment (Puspita & Hasyim, 2022), an assessment and evaluation tool in academic courses (Arif et al., 2020; Colton, 2020; Defilippi et al., 2020), and a knowledge management tool (Alastal et al., 2022; Uden et al., 2013) also provided an electronic portfolio with various

courses that might receive information from various sources in real-time. These studies suggest that Padlet can be used as an effective electronic portfolio for a variety of purposes.

In light of the key points elaborated in this section, it is undeniable that digital literacy skills are essential for language learners in the digital age. E-portfolios and Padlet are promising tools for developing these skills. Language teachers should use these resources to help their students succeed in the present globalized society. Aligned with this idea, this paper intends to explore the potential of e-portfolios and Padlet as tools for fostering digital literacy skills among language learners.

C. METHOD

Focusing on the study objective mentioned earlier, the research was conducted under a case study approach. It was chosen as it attempted to understand the issues being investigated related to the problem statement (Creswell, 2018). The case study design is a powerful tool for examining complex phenomena in a real-world context. It provides a rich, in-depth understanding of how e-portfolios might improve ELLs’ digital literacy skills. A total of 87 ninth-grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah in Cimahi participated in this study. The ninth-grade students were chosen for this study as their ability to operate digital devices was already developed.

Within a month, the students were asked to complete three different tasks that required them to use the Padlet tool as the platform to submit their work. Classroom observations, interview sessions, and documented study were applied as the instruments to gather the data collection. The data was then analyzed using thematic analysis. This involves identifying common themes and patterns in the responses of the participants. The themes were then combined into a framework that described the participants' experiences and insights in improving digital literacy skills with e-portfolios and Padlet.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The ELLs were given three tasks to complete, either individually or in pairs. They were given instructions and practice on how to do each task. The following table 1 describes the three tasks.

Table 1. Padlet Task Topic

No	Time	Task
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1	1 st week of September	Post a favorite song and its YouTube link, with a brief analysis of its identity, genre, tone, and theme (Individual Work)
2	2 nd week of September	Search for a song based on a specific theme, then analyze its identity, genre, tone, and lyrics (Pair Work)
3	3 rd week of September	Share a favorite movie with a brief description of its title, why you like it, and what it's about (Individual Work)

The data collected reveals insights into how the ELLs used e-portfolios and Padlet to develop digital literacy skills. The ELLs learned how to post their work on Padlet and explore its capabilities as an e-portfolio platform. Aligned with this, they had similar experiences collaborating with others on digital projects for task two. The other two tasks were designed to allow them to communicate their work to others, as Padlet is an open-access platform that anyone with the link can access. These findings have shared similar ideas with what Julien (2017, Mantiri et al. (2019), and Thang et al. (2012) found in their studies. It is said that incorporating e-portfolios in language learning might embrace students' digital literacy skills.

By the same token, there were four major benefits portrayed by having Padlet as an e-portfolio in English language learning. First, Padlet enables the ELLs to create and organize digital content in several forms, including text, photos, videos, and links. This can assist students in developing digital literacy skills such as creating content, sorting, and organizing. Second, Padlet allows the ELLs to collaborate on digital projects with peers. This can encourage the ELLs to develop digital literacy skills such as teamwork, communication, and problem-solving.

Figure 1. The ELLs' Works on Padlet

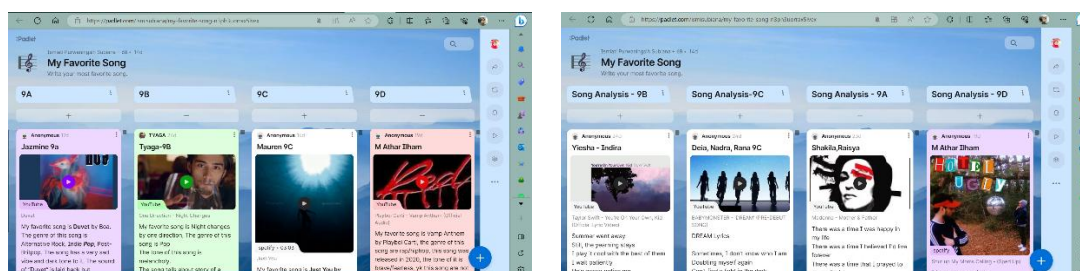
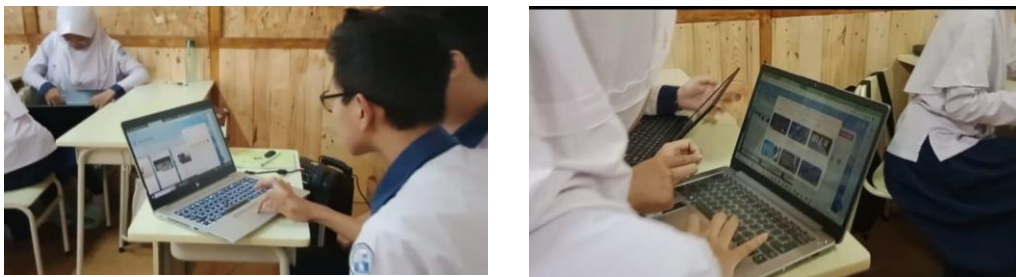


Figure 1 shows the first two advantages of using Padlet as an e-portfolio. ELLs can use the rich features of Padlet to create digital content about their preferred songs. Their first task

in this context was to upload a favorite song with a YouTube link and a brief analysis of its identity, genre, tone, and theme. Their second task was to find a song with a certain theme to analyze its identity, genre, tone, and lyrics. They might work with their classmates to analyze music relating to a given theme and then share the results on their Padlets. The findings also supported the improvement of 21st-century skills that encompasses the 4Cs namely critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Alastal et al., 2022; Arif et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the third benefit is that Padlet might help learners in reflecting on their learning. The ELLs, for example, might use Padlet to create a reflective journal in which they can record their development over time, evaluate their abilities as well as their weaknesses, and set targets for further development. Lastly, the ELLs might use Padlet to help them share what they have learned with others. For instance, they can use Padlet to make a digital portfolio of their work or a presentation to show their teachers or peers.

Figure 2. The ELLs Working with Padlet



What was implied from Figure 2 above confirmed that Padlet encourages learners, particularly English Language Learners, to reflect on their progress (Arif et al., 2020; Melvina et al., 2021), document their development (Colton, 2020; Piniuta, 2019; Puspita & A. Hasyim, 2022), and share their learning outcomes through tools such as reflective journals, progress tracking, and digital portfolios (Cabrera-Solano, 2020; Defilippi et al., 2020; Tompkins et al., 2014).

Following the conclusion of the learning process, the interview sessions of randomly selected ELLs were conducted to get their personal experiences and perceptions on the use of Padlet as an e-portfolio during the learning activities. The interviews revealed that most ELLs have a positive attitude concerning implementing e-portfolios to improve digital literacy skills as shown below.

“This is my first experience using Padlet and I felt so excited.” (ELLs 1)

"This online tool was easy to use. It's not hard to access the Padlet link." (ELLs 2)

"Even though others (peers) could see my works, I still don't mind." (ELLs 3)

"I can customize my post on Padlet. It has awesome features." (ELLs 4)

The transcribes above showed that the ELLs didn't face any difficulties in accessing Padlet. They found it to be an engaging and user-friendly platform. Although it was their first time using Padlet, the ELLs recognized how easy it was to access and utilize the site. They also noticed how they could customize their postings and that Padlet has a broad variety of features. This implies that Padlet is a helpful option for ELLs who are learning digital literacy (Erice & Ertas, 2011; Mantiri et al., 2019; Zaidi, 2019). It is an accessible and simple platform, especially for learners who are unfamiliar with technology. Padlet also has several features that can assist ELLs in creating engaging and informative digital portfolios.

In addition, Padlet is an effective e-portfolio platform, however, it is not without drawbacks. The primary drawback is that it can be difficult to utilize with an unstable internet connection. This is because of Padlet's broad feature set, which includes the ability to publish and browse videos, images, and other multimedia content. When the internet is slow or unstable, certain features may take a long time to load or may not load at all. This can be quite challenging for ELLs who try to find relevant content or publish their work on the Padlet wall. The use of more than three walls was not possible in the free version of Padlet. Therefore, teachers must use another account when they have previously been used to keep ELLs from publishing their works to the Padlet.

E. CONCLUSION

The major result of this study is that Padlet can be a valuable tool for incorporating e-portfolios in language education to enhance digital literacy skills in ELLs. Padlet was used by the ELLs in this study to develop digital portfolios of their work, collaborate with peers on projects, and reflect on their learning. Padlet was also considered to be a user-friendly and interesting platform.

This study has several implications for practice and policy. Teachers can utilize Padlet to help ELLs build their digital literacy skills by having them create digital portfolios, engage in projects with peers, and reflect on their learning. Policymakers might consider investing in professional development for teachers to learn how to use Padlet in their classrooms.

Future research might inquire into the long-term impact of Padlet on ELLs' digital literacy skills, compare it to other e-portfolio platforms, examine how Padlet is employed in different

language contexts and with different ELL populations, and investigate how Padlet can be used to develop specific digital literacy skills in ELLs.

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