

# ICT LITERACY IN STRENGTHENING ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE PASCA COVID-19 ERA

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## **ABSTRACT**

*After COVID-19, ICT literacy is a basis for enhancing English communication ability. ICT literacy skills contribute to English communication skills for EFL teachers and learners. Functional English communication skills, such as the ability to convey ideas or interpret semantics in context, should be prioritized by EFL learners in their day-to-day interactions. However, most EFL learners keep struggling with functional English communication competence. This paper concentrates on conceptual analysis and offers digital-based learning activities for enhancing English communication competency. The conceptual study's findings advise instructors of EFL learners to integrate digital tools to accelerate the development of desired English communication competency. In this framework, mastering ICT literacy could greatly facilitate, improve comprehension of language knowledge, and promote EFL learners' progress toward English communication competency.*

**Keywords:** *communicative competence; english; literacy ICT*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19's presence inspires everyone, particularly the education sector, to adapt for avoiding the stagnation in achieving the desired goal. To facilitate learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, teachers need to utilize and develop learning methods acceptable to pandemic requirements. Digital-based learning is one of the instructional methods that provides numerous benefits for facilitating the implementation of learning during the COVID-19 era. The only unanswered question is what kind of learning model will emerge post-COVID-19? Will stakeholders in education grow to choose digital-based learning? Digital-based learning offers a

new mindset that learning resources and knowledge are no longer centered on conventional classrooms and teachers but on EFL learners themselves. Digital-based learning provides new angle to access learning resources without being limited by space and time and facilitate students to study more optimally (Mahsunah, 2021; Menggo, 2020).

Digital-based learning is the preferred option for EFL learners nowadays since it is compatible with their developing learning styles and meets the demands of current scientific and technical advancements. According to this argument, the advancement and development of digital technology should be considered carefully and adapted to

determine the type of digital technology that can aid in learning achievement, including the English communicative competence of EFL learners. Andriani (2015) claims that digital-based learning can improve the quality of learning, both in terms of process, assessment, and output. Andriani (2015) further added that digital-based learning is a space for knowledge transformation and a forum for building students' initiative, creativity, and independence attitudes in supporting the achievement of the expected learning targets.

During the COVID-19 period, the Government of Indonesia, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, approved the digitization of learning through the use of various digital media in learning activities, such as Zoom, WhatsApp, Google Meet, Ruangguru, YouTube Channel, TeacherTube, educational television programs, electronic books, as well as other website-based digital media (Pemdikbud, 2013). The considerations for using these media are easier access (they are simple to use and can be utilized by any learner), cost-effectiveness and efficiency, flexibility (they may be used at any time and from any place), and innovation (digital technology is always updates various application features to attract users) (Kurniawan, 2005). Therefore, the English learning process is encouraged to continue to take advantage of advances in digital technology to accelerate the achievement of communicative competence for EFL learners. English communicative competence is an excellent path for EFL learners in expressing thoughts, ideas, and notions. Digital media facilitates EFL

learners in fulfilling their English communicative competence.

As stated above, it is impossible to separate English communicative competence itself from the depth of language knowledge of the EFL learners themselves. Language acts as a tool for speakers to convey specific ideas, feelings, thoughts, and intentions in their daily interactions. In addition, several intentions or intentions can be expressed through knowledge of the language possessed, both verbal language in the form of spoken speech production and non-verbal languages, such as the production of sounds and the use of signs and symbols. As a communication tool, body language (gestures) can also be used to convey certain messages. Indeed, EFL learners are driven by curiosity (eagerness) due to their human nature to express themselves through the use of qualified language, both verbal and non-verbal.

Language in the form of signs or symbols plays an important role in conveying implied messages by the people who use the language (Menggo, Ndiung, & Pandor, 2021). Symbolic language presents the semantic richness and offers new interpretations to one's interlocutor or interlocutor himself/herself (Poespoprodjo, 2004). Symbolic empowers mutual engagement and integrates various linguistic elements found in a variety of English learning applications. Verbal language's essence is undeniable due to its role as the primary communication tool that enables the speakers' success and smooth interactions.

Language is a communication system that enables speakers to interact with one another. Language and human life are strongly intertwined in this system.

Without language as a means of communicating with others, humans are incapable of conveying anything in their minds. At all times, communication is a primary need in human life. Communication can be used to achieve a variety of life goals. Communication is how humans fulfill their aims and objectives. With adequate language understanding, one can avoid any misunderstandings regarding the numerous messages that the speech partner would express during language activities. Additionally, as social beings, humans use language as a means of communication to interact with one another.

A language is a tool for communication. Individuals are connected through communication within particular speech communities. Communication can be thought of as a series of activities or actions of a collection of things with intent and purpose. Communication is not just an event, condition, or thing that happens. However, communication is functional, containing specific purposes (Tarigan, 2015: 8-11). With functional communication, speakers and their interlocutors can understand their intentions expressed in language activities.

Speakers are expected to demonstrate the proportionality of language understanding between competence and performance to facilitate this functional communication. Indeed, various linguistic actions in any scenario cannot be separated from the underlying competence and performance. Competence is the speaker's knowledge of his or her language, whereas performance is a manifestation of competence, meaning the speaker's use of language in real-world situations (Chomsky, 1965:4; Brown, 2007:35). If

micro and macro linguistic analyses are correctly performed, one person's language knowledge becomes a reference for others. Micro-linguistics (linguistic competence) is the study of phonology (the system and regulation of a language's sound production), morphological regulation (the process of word production), syntactic regulation (sentence structure), and semantic interpretation (meaning). Meanwhile, macro-linguistics (linguistic performance) discusses language in use and its relationship to factors other than languages, such as sociolinguistics (language use in relation to its social environment), pragmatics (language use coherent with the social and cultural values of specific speech groups), ecolinguistics (language use in relation to the environment or nature), and psycholinguistics (language acquisition following human cognitive development), cultural linguistics, and various other applied linguistic studies.

Language activities are primarily about communicative engagement and are not limited by a set of language norms; hence, language learning at all levels of education is oriented toward using language in everyday life. The essence of language as a means for expressing the functional meanings of language used to be transmitted by language speakers. A communicative approach that defines language as a tool for communication and language acquisition as a goal aims to encourage EFL learners' capacity to use the language for various purposes in various situations and conditions. (Hymes, 1972).

The demand for strengthening communicative competence in English in the current era of digital technology disruption is an absolute option for every

EFL learner because various codes in digital technology cannot be separated from the use of English. According to this reasoning, every EFL learner is required to develop computational linguistic competence, which eventually encompasses an understanding of the many applications of computational linguistic features to facilitate the development of English communication competence.

Adequate computational linguistics can encourage EFL learners to move forward and work by relying on advances in digital technology. Changes in work culture resulting from the transition from non-digital to digital systems are also strongly intertwined with competent English communication abilities. A work culture based on the advancement of digital technology is a crucial step in today's era of digital disruption. According to this argument, ICT literacy is essential to English communicative competence.

Anticipating changes in work culture as a result of advancements in digital technology and English communicative competence, every EFL learner is urged to make every effort to develop their English communication and digital literacy skills. This article addresses the ideas and a variety of ICT literacy activities that can be used to assist students in achieving English communication competence and the importance of ICT-based learning beyond the COVID-19 era.

## **DISCUSSION**

EFL learners cannot avoid English communication competence at this time. This competency is a must for them. For this reason, EFL learners are expected to

be able to demonstrate functional English communication skills in conveying ideas or interpreting contextual and acceptable semantics in various language activities. Most EFL students still struggle to meet the functional communication competence standards as English users. EFL learners should meet all of the micro and macro components of an English communication competency to achieve correct and acceptable functional English communication competence (Menggo, Suparwa, & Astawa, 2019).

For EFL learners, there are two types of micro and macro components: (1) structural competence, which is about grammatical and semantic competence; (2) discourse competence which encourages EFL learners to understand the meaning of the text better; and (3) pragmatic competence that is about the ability to communicate effectively in the target language. Meanwhile, the macro component includes (1) sociolinguistic competence, which focuses on EFL learners' understanding of the cultural and social context of language use, and (2) strategic competence, which is a way for EFL learners to arrange appropriate strategies in initiating, maintaining, and communicating, correcting, directing, repeating various key words in communication, as well as using words as a sign to end a communication (Chomsky, 1965; Fromkin, 2003).

The micro and macro components are mutually exclusive, meaning that EFL learners cannot avoid them during speaking activities. The macro component's success (language in use/performance) cannot be disconnected from the micro component's mastery (language knowledge/competence) that the EFL

student already possesses. The mastery of these two components enables EFL students to present a fully functional and acceptable utterance to their speech partners or language users. Due to the importance of fulfilling all of the micro and macro component indicators mentioned above, speakers are recommended to prioritize their English communication competence. Communicative competence is expressing correct, appropriate, and good thoughts, ideas, or concepts to their interlocutors (Menggo, 2017).

The concept of micro and macro components of English communication competence, as stated by Menggo (2017) above, is aligned with Brown's (2004: 142-143) definition of the micro and macro components of an English speaker's communicative competence. According to Brown, the micro-component is the speaker's language knowledge, which encompasses accurate sound production (pronunciation), grammar, vocabulary, fluency in conveying varied intentions, and accuracy and comprehension of issues in language activities. On the other hand, the macro component is the application of language knowledge in a variety of necessary fields, including sociolinguistics, eco-linguistics, pragmatics, cultural linguistics, computational linguistics, and language use in other fields. In addition, these micro and macro components are also in line with the previous concept of English communicative competence which can be explained in detail as follows.

- a) Micro components include the following indicators:
- 1) The speaker can clearly articulate symbols representing various English sounds, such that the speech partner can distinguish the various sounds

corresponding with the symbols spoken by a speaker;

- 2) The speaker is able to produce stress, tone, and intonation clearly and precisely from the various lexicons used during the conversation so that the speech partner can correctly interpret them;
- 3) Speakers can employ appropriate and acceptable word forms, word classes, and word choices during an interaction;
- 4) Speakers are able to employ a range of registers or styles of language depending on their pragmatic orientation;
- 5) The speaker is able to communicate the speaker's main sentences clearly and accurately in order to aid the speech partner's interpretation of the message conveyed;
- 6) The speaker is able to use supporting sentences to help the communication partner understand the speaker's main points; and
- 7) The speaker can display a coherent/linked utterance in a compatible manner so that the speaking partner can easily follow the conversation well.

- b) Micro components include the following indicators:

- 1) Speakers are capable of employing communication functions that are appropriate to the context, the participants, and the communication aims;
- 2) The speaker possesses the ability to employ relevant style features, rules, implicatures, redundancy, and other sociolinguistic characteristics;
- 3) The speaker is able to demonstrate a clear connection between the events and

the substance of the speech as a result of the linguistic action performed;

- 4) The speaker is able to display paralinguistics (facial expressions, kinesthetics, body language, and other non-verbal language features) in order to improve the understanding of his or her listener; and
- 5) Speakers are knowledgeable in employing a variety of communication strategies, including emphasizing keywords, conveying the idea, and comprehending the interlocutor's non-verbal language.

This understanding of the micro and macro components are strengthened by Finocchiaro and Bonomo's (1973: 40-42) concept of four reciprocal foundations in the language sub-system. The four language sub-systems are 1) The sound system, which includes the pronunciation of vowels and consonants, intonation, rhythm, stress, and pauses in a particular language. (2) The grammar system includes (a) morphology, namely the formation of words through inflection of the plural (plurality), possession, time (tense), and many more, or through derivation, namely changing word classes through changes in prefixes, suffixes, or infix; (b) syntax, namely the arrangement of words, phrases or clauses and sentences of a language; (c) morphophonemic, namely sound changes due to the influence of grammar in specific language sub-systems. (3) The lexical system involves word classes (noun, verb, adjective, and adverb) as well as the function of these words within the clause structure; and (4) The cultural system embodies all of the features of language and the lexical system,

addressing the fact that language is determined by culture, and thus its use must be acceptable within that culture.

It is an ideal hope that EFL learners have a comprehensive understanding of the micro and macro components of English communicative competence and adequate ICT literacy. ICT literacy continues to impact various fields of human life, including in the post-COVID-19 education sector. Educational stakeholders are advised to include a variety of digital technology media in their classroom instruction.

The learning process after COVID-19 is almost similar to the learning process during the COVID-19 era. Education stakeholders are encouraged in their efforts to foster ICT disruption. Disruption can be understood as a path of change from the old system to the new system. Disruption changes old technology that relies more on physical work to digital technology with maximum results, many benefits, and time efficiency (Udayana, 2020). The requirement for a step beyond the disruption era of digital technology in issue motivates education stakeholders to demonstrate adequate ICT literacy. ICT literacy is a must for educators and EFL learners in the learning process during the COVID-19 or post-COVID-19 era.

ICT literacy is one of the three digital literacy skills in 21st-century education (Trilling & Fadel, 2009: 45-86). ICT literacy refers to students' capacity to assess, use various digital media, and design or create (if possible) relevant apps to enable them to achieve their English communication competence more efficiently. Learners can freely acquire language knowledge, particularly those related to micro components, such as phonology

(pronunciation accuracy), morphology (lexicon development), syntax (sentence construction), and semantic interpretation that is acceptable and appropriate in a particular language context, by using or developing relevant applications. Examples of digital technology media applications are e-dictionary, online speech recognition software, Busuu, Hello English, Speak English Conversation, Quillbolt, Ginger, Grammarly, and many more. These digital media are exciting for students because they can present a student-centered learning atmosphere.

Based on the essence of the micro and macro components of the described communication competence, it is essential and urgent to strengthen English communicative competence and ICT literacy for EFL learners during the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 era. The following are the learning activities that may be done in the English learning activities:

- 1) Instruction integrates digital technology in various English learning activities. For Example, the use of e-dictionary, E-learning Moodle, online speech recognition software, Busuu, Hello English, Speak English Conversation, Quillbolt, Ginger, Grammarly, and other relevant applications in supporting the successful achievement of students' English communicative competence. It is believed that the applications in question are not only effective in English activities during the COVID-19 period but are also still relevant and highly required in the post-COVID-19;
- 2) Instruction does not only focus on developing literacy skills, knowledge skills, skills, and attitudes but also on mastery of digital technology by EFL learners;

- 3) English language instruction that emphasizes the use of digital multimedia to assist students in comprehending, managing, and displaying effective communication in a variety of forms, both oral and written;
- 4) Project-based learning in exploring knowledge of micro linguistics (phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics) and macro linguistics, especially related to paralinguistic features assisted by digital technology media that are relevant to strengthening the English communication competence of EFL learners; and
- 5) EFL learners are provided adequate space and time to construct a variety of relevant digital media apps that will aid in the rapid development of English competency.

## CONCLUSION

ICT literacy encourages all education stakeholders to demonstrate an adaptable attitude, creative capacity, and initiative in order to capitalize on the numerous opportunities created by the advancement of digital technology, which continues to have an impact on various sectors of human life, including the education sector, during the COVID-19 and Post-COVID-19 era. Educational stakeholders are urged to include a variety of digital technology media in their classroom instruction. ICT literacy is essential for language acquisition, particularly enhancing communication skills and knowledge. In this setting, mastering ICT literacy can significantly facilitate learning time, promote student autonomy in the classroom, improve students' comprehension of language knowledge, and accelerate the development of English

communication competence. Micro components include accurate sound production (pronunciation), grammar, vocabulary, fluency in expressing various intentions, and accuracy and comprehension of topics in language activities. On the other hand, the macro component is the application of language knowledge in a variety of related fields, including sociolinguistics, eco-linguistics, pragmatics, cultural linguistics, computational linguistics, and other fields. On the strength of this communication competence's micro and macro components, digital technology media must be integrated into the English learning process in the post-COVID-19 learning process.

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