



Challenges and Opportunities: A Qualitative Study of EFL Teachers' Digital Proficiency and its Impact on Interactive Language Assessment

*¹Afra Nadya Putri Insani, ¹Putri Kurniawan Aprilia, ¹Junaidi Mistar

Universitas Islam Malang, Indonesia

***Correspondence:**

afraafra6171@gmail.com

Submission History:

Submitted: January 17, 2024

Revised: February 23, 2024

Accepted: March 18, 2024



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Abstract

This study investigates the digital proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers concerning language assessment development. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, it explores the subjective experiences and perceptions of EFL teachers engaged in constructing language tests within educational contexts. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three participants, each representing diverse backgrounds in English Language Teaching (ELT). Moreover, thematic analysis was utilized to interpret the collected data systematically. The findings reveal specific challenges encountered by teachers in implementing interactive language assessments, including the identification of appropriate instructional materials, selection of suitable assessment models, and integration of digital tools into teaching methodologies. Moreover, participants suggest that technology can positively impact student engagement, motivation, and collaboration during assessments. By recognizing the continuous nature of language learning and assessment, educators can better tailor their approaches to meet the evolving needs of language learners. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on language assessment practices, highlighting the importance of incorporating digital resources and fostering a supportive learning environment for students.

Keywords: Students, language, behaviour, thinking, intensity, intercultural, communication, social media

INTRODUCTION

The language instruction and evaluation field has rapidly transformed due to the rise of digital technologies (Štofková et al., 2022). This digital shift, fueled by technological advancements, changing educational needs, and the potential benefits of digital tools, has received significant attention (Alarcón et al., 2020). Interactive digital tools and online platforms are gradually replacing traditional classroom tools. As a result, language teachers must adapt to this dynamic environment by developing digital proficiencies that extend beyond their core pedagogical knowledge.

Digital resources are transforming English language learning. Studies show they boost verbal skills, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. Internet access and social media foster intercultural understanding and global awareness (Golonka et al., 2012; Kabilan et al., 2010). Technology also allows teachers to personalize instruction in large classes, incorporate diverse learning styles, and encourage collaboration, making learning more engaging. However, despite these advantages, many language classrooms remain stuck in the past, relying solely on traditional methods and materials (Blikstad-Balas & Klette, 2020). Learners rarely get to explore the potential of digital tools. This lack of exposure is a significant issue, as traditional methods fail to equip students with the skills needed in our technology-driven world. Furthermore, limited access to online environments hinders learners' ability to practice communication skills in authentic, interactive contexts, especially crucial for English learners.

The digital revolution has reshaped the language teaching and assessment landscape, requiring teachers to develop new skills for effective test creation (Nguyen & Habók, 2023). Digital competence, particularly in assessment, is crucial for teachers to enhance their EFL instruction (Alarcón et al., 2020; Falloon, 2020). This competence enables teachers to design practical, engaging language tests within the digital realm (Chigbu et al., 2023). Assessments now transcend traditional skill evaluations and incorporate computer-based formats, online platforms, and interactive tasks. To successfully develop and implement these technology-driven assessments, teachers need a strong understanding of available digital tools and their appropriate applications (Caena & Redecker, 2019).

Building upon previous research, Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al. (2022) conducted a systematic literature review to thoroughly examine university educators' digital competencies. Their comprehensive analysis revealed that many educators self-assess their digital proficiency as low to medium-low, especially in assessment practices (Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos et al., 2022). This highlights a critical gap in the digieducators' digital skillset and emphasises the need for research and targeted training initiatives to enhance their digital capabilities, particularly in modern higher education. Additionally, Skantz-Åberg et al. (2022) analyzed 18 publications to explore teachers' professional digital competence in educational research. They identified seven key aspects: technological competence, pedagogical competence, and critical thinking skills. Technological and pedagogical skills were the most prominent (Skantz-Åberg et al., 2022).

This study addresses several critical gaps in the literature on language assessment development. First, while previous research investigates language assessment practices, there is a need to be a more in-depth exploration of EFL teachers' digital proficiency, specifically in the context of assessment development. Second, there is a need better to understand EFL teachers' subjective experiences and perceptions when designing language tests. This study provides this qualitative perspective, which needs to be included in quantitative research. Finally, this study includes participants from diverse educational backgrounds to ensure comprehensive insights.

Specifically, this study investigates EFL teachers' digital proficiency and its influence on language assessment development. It explores their experiences with integrating digital tools and resources into assessments. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this research uncovers teachers' lived experiences within this field. The study identifies teachers' specific challenges when implementing interactive language assessments,

including instructional materials, assessment models, and digital tool integration issues. Finally, the study illuminates the perceived impact of technology on student engagement, motivation, and collaboration during assessments.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to comprehensively understand language teachers' digital proficiency in language assessment development. A phenomenological approach was chosen to deeply explore the subjective experiences of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers actively engaged in constructing language tests (Armayanti, 2019). This approach allowed for in-depth insights into their perspectives and their engagement with digital tools in the assessment process (Brooks & King, 2017).

The primary data collection method was semi-structured interviews with three EFL teachers. Teacher 1, hailing from a private school background, brings five years of experience in English Language Teaching (ELT). His approach to language assessment involves utilizing Google Forms to create English tests for his students, streamlining the testing process and providing efficient feedback. Teacher 2, however, comes from a public school setting and has four years of ELT experience. Her method of language assessment revolves around using an online platform to administer English examinations. Moreover, teacher 3, who comes from a language institute background, possesses eight years of experience in English Language Teaching (ELT). In her approach to language assessment, she utilizes Quizizz, an interactive online platform, to conduct English examinations.

This approach allowed an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions (Polkinghorne, 2006). Interviews were conducted online via WhatsApp Video Call between May and June 2023, ensuring convenience for participants (Kaufmann & Peil, 2020). Interview questions were carefully designed to investigate the digital skills needed for effective language test creation, challenges faced by teachers in developing these skills, and strategies for professional development in this area. Questions were asked in Indonesian to promote clear understanding.

To ensure the credibility and reliability of the data, the researchers employed data saturation (Mpofu, 2020). This technique ensured that comprehensive responses were obtained, enhancing the validity of the findings. After collection, transcribed data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Brooks & King, 2017). This involved identifying patterns and themes within the data to understand participants' experiences with digital competence in language test construction. Thematic analysis followed a systematic process of categorization and interpretation to ensure a rigorous examination of the data.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This study uncovered valuable findings that directly addressed the research questions guiding the investigation. Researchers carefully analyzed interview data, identifying three primary themes. The first theme centred on specific challenges teachers face when developing digital proficiency for language assessment design. The second theme explored the strategies teachers used to overcome these challenges. Finally, the third theme illuminated techniques teachers employ to foster student engagement and collaboration within the context of digital assessments.

The Teachers' Specific Challenges

Teacher 1, with five years of experience in English Language Teaching (ELT) at a private school, shared his insights on language assessment during the interview. He highlighted a recurring challenge he encountered in selecting appropriate assessment models, expressing a desire to move beyond traditional methods like multiple-choice questions and essays, which he found monotonous. He sought fresh approaches each time to infuse novelty into English assessments, aiming to engage his students more effectively. This sentiment aligns with the findings of [Lai et al. \(2020\)](#), who underscored the significance of integrating innovative assessment methods to enrich student learning experiences. This highlights the need to develop innovative assessment strategies that effectively measure language competence while maintaining student interest and participation ([Frey et al., 2012](#); [Bahrani, 2011](#)). However, Teacher 1 also faced connectivity issues at his school, further complicating the assessment process. Slow internet required him to exercise patience while crafting evaluation questions, adding a layer of challenge to his efforts. [Dridi et al. \(2020\)](#) noted that intermittent connection problems can lead to feelings of powerlessness in the instructor.

Furthermore, reflecting on the challenges faced, Teacher 3 emphasized the difficulty in determining the most suitable assessment model to evaluate student abilities accurately. "I faced a significant challenge: determining the most suitable and authentic assessment model to accurately evaluate student abilities,". The significance of authentic assessment lies in its ability to showcase students' capabilities effectively while providing valuable feedback and guidance for their growth and development ([Janesick, 2006](#)). Additionally, authentic assessment is crucial in shaping students' self-concept, motivation, attitudes, and self-confidence ([Mintah, 2003](#); [Finch, 2002](#)). This challenge often left him needing clarification about which approach would be the most effective. A primary concern for Teacher 3 was the potential exploitation of online resources by students during online tests, which could undermine the authenticity of his results. This sentiment is also echoed by [Lapitan et al. \(2021\)](#), who emphasized that ensuring academic integrity has become a major concern with the shift to online assessments.

He raised questions about the reliability and validity of assessments conducted through the app, prompting a need for careful consideration and potentially exploring alternative assessment methods or implementing additional measures to ensure the integrity of the evaluation process ([Chen et al., 2019](#)). Despite these challenges, Teacher 3 remained committed to providing fair and reliable assessments to his students. Through his experiences, he highlighted the importance of maintaining the integrity of the assessment process while navigating the complexities of technology-enhanced evaluation in language education. The validity and reliability of the assessment instrument remain crucial considerations ([Zhang et al., 2020](#)), as well as the provision of comprehensive guidelines for test administration and scoring. By carefully navigating these considerations, teachers can harness the benefits of technology while maintaining the integrity and fairness of language assessments. Thus, the finding highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines technological advancement with thoughtful pedagogical considerations for optimal language assessment practices.

Besides, teacher 2 discussed her previous responsibilities, primarily focused on guiding students in navigating and utilizing the English language test application she

employed. "In the past, my main responsibility was to provide students with clear instructions on how to navigate and utilize the English language test application that I employed," she stated. Fortunately, explaining the application's mechanisms to the students was not relatively easy, as they had prior experience using it. As stated by [Holland and Holland \(2014\)](#), most students are now packing an impressive set of apps used for learning, sharing, and entertainment, all in their pockets with access at an all-time high. Consequently, Teacher 2 could offer straightforward guidance and support, ensuring students understood how to make the most of the app's features. By simplifying explanations and capitalizing on students' familiarity with the software, Teacher 2 fostered a conducive learning environment and facilitated effective application use for their language assessments. Through her experiences, Teacher 2 highlighted the importance of leveraging students' prior knowledge to enhance their learning experiences and maximize the benefits of educational technology in language education.

Student engagement and Collaboration

Reflecting on her observations, Teacher 2 shared insights into student motivation in the context of technology-based assessments. "I do not have a guaranteed method, but I have observed a consistent pattern where students exhibit motivation when they work on tests that involve technology-based media," she stated. Teacher 2 noted that these tests significantly affect students' values, encouraging them to participate actively. She highlighted that when technology is integrated into assessments, students perceive them as more relevant and compelling, leading to increased motivation to perform well. [Licorish et al. \(2018\)](#) state that technology is increasingly integrated into teaching environments to enhance students' engagement and motivation. Consequently, the inclusion of technology-based media in tests positively impacts student engagement and work ethic, as per Teacher 2's observations. Through her experiences, Teacher 2 underscored the importance of leveraging technology to enhance student motivation and engagement in language assessments, ultimately contributing to their academic success.

Besides expanding on his perspective, Teacher 3 emphasized the importance of facilitating uninterrupted student engagement in language assessment. "Ensuring unimpeded student engagement in language assessment is paramount," he asserted. Teacher 3 argued that in the contemporary era, students demonstrate advanced digital proficiencies, showcasing their adeptness at integrating technology into their daily lives ([Martzoukou et al., 2020](#)). Incorporating educational technology like video lectures, online course delivery, and digital assessments has been observed to enhance the growth of both educators' and students' knowledge and abilities ([Lapitan et al., 2021](#)). He highlighted that this digital competence offers a distinct opportunity to capitalize on digital tools and platforms for language assessment. Educators can craft assessments that resonate with their technological proficiency by tapping into students' existing digital skills, thereby nurturing heightened engagement and motivation. Through his insights, Teacher 3 underscored the significance of aligning assessment practices with students' digital capabilities to optimize learning outcomes in language education.

In addition, teacher 1 emphasized using the Padlet application to simplify students' evaluations and extend feedback to exams. According to research conducted by [Diab \(2019\)](#), most students responded favourably regarding their use of Padlet since Padlet is a communication platform that supplies learners with the space to engage in discussions and

activities of a common interest or purpose. By employing Padlet, students can readily offer assessments and appraisals to their peers, enhancing their learning experiences. Furthermore, Teacher 1 recognized the significance of broadening this examination feedback approach. Through the implementation of a feedback system for exams, students are allowed to articulate their thoughts, identify areas for improvement, and enrich their overall learning journey (Gikandi & Morrow, 2015; Keppell & Carless, 2006). "By incorporating a feedback system for exams," Teacher 1 explained, "students will have the opportunity to express their thoughts, pinpoint areas of improvement, and enhance their overall learning experience."

Teacher 1 elaborated on how this approach promotes continuous improvement in teaching and assessment practices as educators gain valuable insights to refine future exams. Padlet facilitates a collaborative and reflective learning process, empowering students and encouraging active participation in their education. By encouraging students to engage in peer evaluations and offering feedback on exams, Teacher 1 fosters a student-centred environment that prioritizes continuous growth and development. Through his innovative use of Padlet, Teacher 1 underscores the importance of integrating technology to enhance the assessment process and promote student engagement in language education (Jong & Tan, 2021).

Finally, this study sheds light on the transformative potential of technology. It moves beyond viewing technology as a simple tool and highlights its power to reshape learning and teaching. The study's findings extend beyond language assessment, offering valuable insights for broader educational innovation and preparing students for the future workforce. This aligns with Hidayat et al. (2022), who argue that technology is at the forefront of educational transformation, offering many tools to create engaging, collaborative, and compelling learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This research identified and addressed challenges encountered by teachers in language assessment. The investigation highlighted difficulties in selecting appropriate materials and assessment models, managing connectivity issues, and formulating dynamic assessments. Technology adoption emerged as a viable strategy, utilizing tools like Padlet or Google Form to enhance engagement and collaboration. However, it is important to acknowledge the limitation of this study due to the small number of research participants, which may impact the generalizability of the findings. The researcher contributes novelty by suggesting the effectiveness of alternative instructional materials, innovative assessment models using emerging technologies, and addressing connectivity issues. These findings fill a crucial research gap and have broader implications for language education. They emphasize the importance of technology integration, offering guidance to teachers and policymakers to improve language learning and evaluation practices. Future research can build on these insights to develop innovative approaches for language assessment, promoting inclusive and efficient educational practices. By exploring a more comprehensive range of participants and incorporating diverse perspectives, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in language assessment.

REFERENCES

- Alarcón, R., Del Pilar Jiménez, E., & De Vicente-Yagüe, M. I. (2020). Development and validation of the DIGIGLO, a tool for assessing the digital competence of educators. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 51(6), 2407–2421. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12919>
- Armayanti, R. (2019). A Review of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on Qualitative Research. *REiLA*, 1(1), 29–34. <https://doi.org/10.31849/reila.v1i1.2768>
- Bahrani, T. (2011). Technology as an assessment tool in language learning. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 1(2). <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v1n2p295>
- Basilotta-Gómez-Pablos, V., Matarranz, M., Casado-Aranda, L., & Otto, A. (2022). Teachers' digital competencies in higher education: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-021-00312-8>
- Blikstad-Balas, M., & Klette, K. (2020b). Still, a long way to go. *Digital Kompetanse*, 15(1), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-943x-2020-01-05>
- Brooks, J., & King, N. (2017c). *Applied Qualitative Research in Psychology*. Red Globe Press.
- Caena, F., & Redecker, C. (2019). Aligning teacher competence frameworks to 21st-century challenges: The case for the European Digital Competence Framework for Educators (Digcompedu). *European Journal of Education*, 54(3), 356–369. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12345>
- Chen, C., Liu, H., & Huang, H. (2019). Effects of a mobile game-based English vocabulary learning app on learners' perceptions and learning performance: A case study of Taiwanese EFL learners. *ReCALL*, 31(2), 170–188. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0958344018000228>
- Chigbu, B. I., Ngwevu, V., & Jojo, A. (2023). The effectiveness of innovative pedagogy in the industry 4.0: Educational ecosystem perspective. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 7(1), 100419. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100419>
- Diab, A. A. M. (2019). Using Some Online Collaborative Learning Tools (Google et al.) to Develop Student Teachers' EFL Creative Writing Skills and Writing Self-Efficacy. *Journal of Faculty of Education - Benha University*, 30(3), 1–51. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jfeb.2019.61360>
- Dridi, M. A., Radhakrishnan, D., Moser-Mercer, B., & DeBoer, J. (2020). Challenges of blended learning in refugee camps: When internet connectivity fails, human connection succeeds. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 21(3). <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v21i3.4770>
- Falloon, G. (2020). From digital literacy to digital competence: the teacher digital competency (TDC) framework. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 68(5), 2449–2472. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-020-09767-4>
- Finch, A. (2002). Authentic Assessment: Implications for EFL performance testing in Korea. *Secondary Education Research*. 49, 89 – 122
- Frey, B. B., Schmitt, V. L., & Allen, J. P. (2012). Defining authentic classroom assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research and Evaluation*, 17(2), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.7275/sxbs-0829>

- Gikandi, J., & Morrow, D. (2015). Designing and implementing peer formative feedback within online learning environments. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 25(2), 153–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939x.2015.1058853>
- Golonka, E. M., Bowles, A. R., Frank, V. M., Richardson, D. L., & Freynik, S. (2012). Technologies for foreign language learning: a review of technology types and their effectiveness. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 27(1), 70–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2012.700315>
- Hidayat, D. N., Lee, J. Y., Mason, J., & Khaerudin, T. (2022). Digital technology supporting English learning among Indonesian university students. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-022-00198-8>
- Holland, J., & Holland, J. J. (2014). Implications of shifting technology in education. *TechTrends*, 58(3), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11528-014-0748-3>
- Janesick, V. J. (2006). *Authentic Assessment Primer*. Peter Lang
- Jong, B., & Tan, K. H. (2021). Using Padlet as a technological tool for assessment of students writing skills in online classroom settings. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(2), 411–423. <https://doi.org/10.18488/journal.61.2021.92.411.423>
- Kabilan, M. K., Ahmad, N. N. N., & Abidin, M. J. Z. (2010). Facebook: An online environment for learning English in institutions of higher education? *The Internet and Higher Education*, 13(4), 179–187. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2010.07.003>
- Kaufmann, K., & Peil, C. (2019). The mobile instant messaging interview (MIMI): Using WhatsApp to enhance self-reporting and explore media usage in situ. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 8(2), 229–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157919852392>
- Keppell, M., & Carless, D. (2006). Learning-oriented assessment: A technology-based case study. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 13(2), 179–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09695940600703944>
- Lai, C., Jong, B. S., Hsia, Y., & Lin, T. (2020). Applying Concept Map to Game-Base Concept Assessment. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies*, 14(06), 159. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijim.v14i06.12057>
- Lapitan, L. D., Tiangco, C., Sumalinog, D. a. G., Sabarillo, N. S., & Diaz, J. M. S. (2021). An effective blended online teaching and learning strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education for Chemical Engineers*, 35, 116–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ece.2021.01.012>
- Licorish, S. A., Owen, H., Daniel, B. K., & George, J. L. (2018). Students' perception of Kahoot!'s influence on teaching and learning. *Research and Practice in Technology Enhanced Learning*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41039-018-0078-8>
- Nguyen, L. a. T., & Habók, A. (2023). Tools for assessing teacher digital literacy: A review. *Journal of Computers in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40692-022-00257-5>
- Martouzoukou, K., Fulton, C., Kostagiolas, P. and Lavranos, C. (2020), "A study of higher education students' self-perceived digital competences for learning and everyday life online participation", *Journal of Documentation*, 76 (6), 1413-1458. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-03-2020-0041>
- Mintah, J. K. (2003). Authentic Assessment in Physical Education: prevalence of use and perceived impact on students' Self-Concept, motivation, and skill achievement. *Measurement in Physical Education and Exercise Science*, 7(3), 161–174. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327841mpee0703_03

- Mpofu, F. Y. (2020). Saturation controversy in qualitative research: Complexities and underlying assumptions. A literature review. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2020.1838706>
- Polkinghorne, D. E. (2006). An agenda for the second generation of qualitative studies. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being*, 1(2), 68–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17482620500539248>
- Skantz-Åberg, E., Lantz-Andersson, A., Lundin, M., & Williams, P. (2022). Teachers' professional digital competence: an overview of conceptualizations in the literature. *Cogent Education*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186x.2022.2063224>
- Štofková, Z., Poliaková, A., Štofková, K. R., Malega, P., Krejnus, M., Biňasová, V., & Daneshjo, N. (2022). Digital skills as a significant factor of human resources development. *Sustainability*, 14(20), 13117. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su142013117>
- Zhang, F., Schunn, C. D., Li, W., & Long, M. (2020). Changes in the reliability and validity of peer assessment across the college years. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(8), 1073–1087. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2020.1724260>