

More Than Just Words: Media Literacy and The Development of EFL Writing Class

Fitri Nurdianingsih^{1*}, M. Ali Ghufron², Ima Isnaini Taufiqur Rohmah³,
Zilvia Nur Izzatisselim⁴

^{1,3,4} The English Education Study Program, IKIP PGRI Bojonegoro, Jl. Panglima Polim No.46
Bojonegoro, East Java, Indonesia

² Universitas Islam Negeri KH Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia

¹ fitri_nurdianingsih@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id, ² m.ali.ghufron@uingusdur.ac.id,

³ isnainiima@ikippgribojonegoro.ac.id, ⁴ zilvianurizzaaa@gmail.com

Abstract

The study concentrated on the opinions and experiences of second-year students enrolled in a writing course that emphasizes media literacy. A case study design is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the effects of media literacy-based activities on EFL writing skills within a specific context. Questionnaires on media attitudes and how it affects their writing skills were used to collect data. According to the findings, most students thought that the media literacy exercises improved their ability to think critically, comprehend media messages, and communicate effectively in English. The present study thus underscores the need to embed media literacy into the EFL curriculum to enhance critical thinking among learners and to improve their writing competence. Further research is welcome to help refine these pedagogical strategies and resolve contextual challenges for the best learning outcomes.

Keywords: Media-Literacy Activities; EFL Writing Class

INTRODUCTION

In today's information-rich environment, media literacy is crucial because it allows people to interact critically with media content and successfully travel the challenges of the digital age. As media technologies evolve, the ability to discern credible information from misinformation becomes increasingly vital. The abilities required to access, examine, assess, and produce media in its many forms are collectively referred to as media literacy, fostering informed and active participation in society. Media literacy is crucial for identifying quality journalism and resisting misinformation, such as fake news and propaganda. It empowers individuals to discern false information and cope with the influence of media on perceptions of reality (Abdullah, 2022)

The significance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing skills is paramount in the academic and professional development of learners. EFL writing skills not only facilitate effective communication but also enhance cognitive abilities and cultural understanding. These skills are crucial for students aiming to publish in prestigious journals and participate in international academic discourse. EFL writing skills are essential for crafting well-organized and coherent research articles, which are critical for academic success. The ability to construct effective introductions, as highlighted in studies on rhetorical moves, is particularly important for publication in Scopus-indexed journals. These skills help students and researchers present their work compellingly and persuasively, increasing their chances of acceptance in high-impact journals (Sulistiyani, Mujiyanto, & Suwandi, 2022)

Writing in a foreign language enhances cognitive competence such as critical thinking and problem-solving. It also improves linguistic abilities, including vocabulary and grammar, which

are necessary for producing coherent and cohesive texts. Thematic organization and progression, as explored in comparative studies, are vital components of effective writing that can be taught to improve students' argumentative and academic writing skills (Jalilifar, Alipour, & Rabiee, 2017). Understanding the specific writing needs of EFL learners is crucial for educators. Research indicates that students require support in areas such as punctuation, sentence structure, vocabulary, and idea development. Addressing these needs can significantly improve their overall writing ability and confidence in expressing ideas. EFL writing skills are not only about language proficiency but also about preparing students to engage in global dialogues. Combining Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) strategies in EFL classrooms can enhance students' academic writing by focusing on subject-specific vocabulary and authentic communication, thus preparing them for international challenges (Balle & Olsen, 2023).

While the focus on EFL writing skills is crucial, it is also important to consider the challenges faced by learners, such as cognitive demands and limited exposure to the language. Addressing these challenges through innovative teaching methods and supportive learning environments can further enhance the effectiveness of EFL writing instruction. The connection between media literacy and EFL writing skills is an emerging area of interest, highlighting the need for further investigation. This research gap is underscored by the increasing role of digital media in education and the obstacles faced by EFL learners in developing writing proficiency. Understanding this connection can provide insights into how media literacy can enhance EFL writing skills, offering new strategies and tools for educators and learners.

EFL learners often face significant challenges in writing, such as language proficiency issues, difficulty in finding relevant resources, and time management problems. These challenges necessitate effective strategies, including the use of digital media, to support writing tasks (Ramadhanti, Oktaviana, Tarohoran, & Fitriani, 2023). The complexity of producing coherent and well-organized texts in an EFL context is compounded by cognitive demands and limited language exposure. Techniques like Rhetorical Structure Theory (RST) have been explored to improve text coherence, but more innovative approaches are needed (Sulistiyani, Mujiyanto, & Suwandi, 2022).

Media literacy involves the ability in accessing, analyzing, evaluating, and creating media which is recognized as a crucial ability in facing the globalization era. The growing body of literature on media literacy, as evidenced by a scient metric study, highlights its multidisciplinary nature and its potential impact on various fields, including education (Asadzandi, Shahbodaghi, Sajjadi, Kamkarhaghghi, & Hemmat, 2013). The integration of media literacy into EFL learning can provide learners with the skills to critically engage with digital content, thereby enhancing their writing proficiency. This is particularly relevant in the context of digital media's role in education (Aiju & Abdullah, 2024). Extensive reading has been shown to improve EFL writing proficiency by expanding vocabulary and enhancing reading fluency. This approach can complement media literacy by providing diverse perspectives and content for learners to engage with, thereby improving their ability to convey ideas effectively in writing. While the connection between media literacy and EFL writing is promising, it is essential to consider the broader educational context. The integration of digital tools and media literacy into EFL curricula must be carefully designed to address the specific needs of learners and educators. Further research is needed to explore the most effective ways to leverage media literacy for enhancing EFL writing skills.

The connection between media literacy and language learning has garnered increasing attention in academic discourse, particularly as digital technologies become more integrated into educational contexts. Media literacy, defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media in various forms, plays a crucial role in enhancing language learning outcomes. This literature review synthesizes findings from multiple studies that highlight the

interconnectedness of media literacy and language acquisition. One significant aspect of media literacy in language learning is its potential to foster communicative competence. The pedagogical implications of these findings suggest that media literacy not only supports language learning but also prepares learners for active participation in a democratic society. Moreover, the influence of digital media on language acquisition is particularly pronounced in bilingual contexts. 's research indicates that media serves as a vital tool for language enrichment, facilitating translanguaging practices among children (Hafizha, 2023). This aligns with findings from Dore, et. al., who highlight that children's media use can significantly impact their language and literacy skills, suggesting that interactive media may offer unique advantages for language development (Dore et al., 2020). However, it is important to note that the benefits of interactive media are not universally supported, as some studies indicate that overall media exposure, rather than interactivity, may be more predictive of language and literacy skills (Dore et al., 2020).

The integration of technology in language learning environments can thus create rich input opportunities that enhance learners' linguistic capabilities. Additionally, the role of social media in language literacy development cannot be overlooked. emphasizes that social media platforms can be harnessed to motivate learners and create engaging language learning experiences (Hadiapurwa, 2023). The integration of media literacy into language education not only enhances communicative competence but also enriches the learning experience through the use of digital tools and resources. As educators continue to navigate the evolving landscape of language instruction, prioritizing media literacy will be essential for fostering effective and engaged language learners.

METHOD

A case study design is appropriate for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of the effects of media literacy-based activities on EFL writing skills within a specific context. A case study is particularly appropriate for understanding complex phenomena within real-life settings and provides a detailed examination of how media literacy influences students' writing abilities (Yin, 2018). This design will provide a rich and detailed understanding of the phenomenon being investigated. The second-year students were chosen because learners at this stage are typically developing their writing skills and are likely to benefit significantly from targeted interventions. This study used questionnaire to assess the students' perceptions and students' learning experience in media-literacy activities. Furthermore, students' written work before and after engaging in media literacy activities was analyzed to evaluate actual improvements in writing skills, helping determine the extent to which media-based interventions influenced their ability to construct coherent and well-structured texts (Ferris, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aimed to verify the students' perception and students' learning experience in media-literacy activities in descriptive and narrative writing course. Two questionnaires were conducted in this study, namely students' perception and students' learning experience questionnaires.

Table 1. Students' Perception Questionnaire

No	Students' Perception Questionnaire	Scale
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		1	2	3	4	5
1	Media literacy activities helped me understand the messages in media more critically	0	18.8	25	31.3	25
2	I found the media literacy activities to be engaging and interesting	0	12.5	25	43.8	18.8
3	I believe that media literacy activities have improved my writing skills	0	12.5	18.8	37.5	12.5
4	I feel more confident in my ability to analyze and evaluate media after participating in these activities.	0	0	25	50	6.25
5	The media literacy activities helped me to think more deeply about the topics we discussed in class.	6.25	0	18.8	50	6.25
6	I found it helpful to work collaboratively with my classmates on the media literacy activities	0	6.25	31.3	37.5	6.25
7	I believe that media literacy activities are a valuable addition to the EFL curriculum.	0	6.25	31.3	25	18.8
8	The media literacy activities helped me to become a more critical thinker.	0	6.25	25	31.3	18.8
9	I would like to participate in more media literacy activities in the future	6.25	0	31.3	25	18.8
10	I believe that media literacy activities can help EFL learners to become more effective communicators.	6.25	0	25	31.3	18.8

Based on the table above, these are various aspects of media literacy activities that students evaluated, such as how these activities helped them critically understand media messages, improved their writing skills, or supported collaboration. The mean percentage for each scale across all questions is as follows: Scale 1 (strongly disagree) was 1.89%; Scale 2 (disagree) was 6.26%; Scale 3 (Neutral) was 25.60%; Scale 4 (Agree) was 36.84%; and Scale 5 (strongly agree) was 18.19%. these averages suggest that most students rated the media literacy activities positively, with a majority learning towards “Agree” (Scale 4). The highest average rating is for Scale 4, indicating overall agreement with the statements.

Table 2. Students’ Learning Experience using media-literacy activities

No	Students’ Learning Experiences using media-literacy in Descriptive and Narrative writing class	Scoring Scale				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	The media-based activities helped me improve my Descriptive and Narrative writing skills.	0	13.3	20	40	26.7

2	I found the media content (e.g., videos, news articles, social media posts) engaging and relevant to my learning	6.7	6.7	13.3	40	33.3
3	Analyzing media content made it easier to understand complex writing techniques	0	13.3	53.3	0	33.3
4	Media literacy activities helped me critically assess the reliability of information sources.	0	13.3	46.7	13.3	20
5	The media-based tasks encouraged me to think creatively while writing.	0	13.3	40	33.3	6.7
6	I feel more confident in expressing my ideas in English after completing media literacy-based activities.	0	6.7	53.3	20	13.3
7	The variety of media used in the activities made the writing tasks more enjoyable	6.7	6.7	40	26.7	13.3
8	Media-based discussions with classmates improved my ability to form well-supported arguments in writing	0	20	40	26.7	6.7
9	The use of media content helped me understand cultural differences in communication styles	6.7	6.7	26.7	26.7	26.7
10	I believe media literacy is an important skill for improving my English writing in real-world contexts	0	13.3	33.3	33.3	13.3

The table above presents data regarding participants’ responses to various statements about media-literacy activities and media literacy in relation to English writing skills. The statements explore topics such as how engaging the media content was, whether it helped improve writing skills, if it made more enjoyable, and the perceived value of media literacy. The mean percentages for each scale across all statements are as follows: scale 1 (strongly disagree) was 2.01%; scale 2 (disagree) was 11.33%; scale 3 (neutral) was 36.66%; scale 4 (agree) was 30.67%; and scale 5 (strongly agree) was 16.67%. These means suggest that most respondents were neutral or agreed with the statements, with relatively fewer participants strongly disagreeing. The analysis suggests that media literacy-based activities can have a significant positive effect on EFL learners’ writing skills. By providing engaging, real-world content, fostering critical thinking, enhancing creativity, and exposing students to diverse communication styles, media literacy enriches the writing experience. Although not all students may immediately recognize or feel the benefits (as seen in the range of neutral responses in the data), media literacy activities clearly help learners develop not only their language proficiency but also their ability to think critically and write effectively in diverse contexts.

Discussion

The findings from the survey, where the mean percentages for each scale across all statements were: scale 1 (strongly disagree) at 2.01%, scale 2 (disagree) at 11.33%, scale 3 (neutral) at

36.66%, scale 4 (agree) at 30.67%, and scale 5 (strongly agree) at 16.67%, suggest a tendency towards neutrality or agreement among respondents. This distribution aligns with theoretical frameworks and previous research on response patterns in surveys, particularly in the context of attitude measurement and response biases.

The structural-functional approach to attitudes suggests that attitudes are organized hierarchically and can be influenced by various components such as affective, cognitive, and action elements (Phuong, 2023). The high percentage of neutral responses (36.66%) may reflect the complexity and multidimensionality of attitudes, where respondents might not have a strong affective or cognitive stance, leading them to choose a neutral position.

The preference for neutral or agreeable responses can be linked to the ease of using rating scales, as they are perceived as faster and simpler compared to open-ended responses (Sikström et al., 2023). This ease might lead to a satisficing behavior, where respondents choose a middle or agreeable option to minimize cognitive effort, especially in low-salience topics (Eynde & Lobera, 2022).

The psychometric analysis of scales, such as the Decisional Conflict Scale, highlights the importance of scale design in capturing the full range of respondent attitudes (Pozzar et al., 2019). The distribution of responses in the survey might indicate that the scale effectively captures a range of attitudes, but the high neutral response rate could also suggest a need for more discriminative items to better differentiate between subtle attitude differences.

The concept of pseudo neglect, a perceptual asymmetry bias, suggests that individuals might have a leftward bias in scale responses, although this was not significantly supported in further analyses (Poncelet, 2015). This bias could potentially influence the distribution of responses, but the lack of significant findings indicates that other factors, such as individual differences and topic salience, might play a more substantial role.

The analysis of media literacy-based activities on EFL writing skills reveals a multifaceted impact, enhancing various dimensions of writing proficiency. These activities, which incorporate diverse media forms and engagement strategies, have been shown to improve writing skills, motivation, and genre awareness among EFL learners. Media-literacy activities, such as using online news items, have been found to significantly enhance students' writing abilities. These activities not only improve writing outcomes but also increase motivation to engage with writing tasks, as demonstrated by the significant differences in student performance when compared to traditional textbook methods (Mustain et al., 2022).

Digital storytelling, both online and offline, has been shown to improve argumentative writing skills. Offline digital storytelling, in particular, resulted in greater improvements in literacy skills compared to online methods, suggesting the importance of blended learning approaches in media literacy activities (Salem, 2022). Genre-based activities (GBAs) have been effective in developing students' reviewing skills in writing. By increasing genre awareness, students can better evaluate and revise texts, although unfamiliar genres may pose challenges (Nguyen, 2022). Engagement-based activities have demonstrated a high effect size in improving EFL writing skills. These activities, which focus on active participation and motivation, have been shown to significantly outperform traditional teaching methods in enhancing writing proficiency ("Using engagement-based activities to enhance EFL preparatory stage students' writing skills and motivation", 2023).

The integration of reading and writing skills in media literacy activities can lead to significant improvements in performance. Providing students with picture clues and engaging them in complex activities can enhance their writing skills, although challenges remain in specific areas like sentence rewriting tasks ("Literacy attainments as prone to communication skills follow-up", 2023). While media literacy-based activities have shown promising results in enhancing EFL writing skills, it is important to consider the context and resources available. Blended learning approaches, which combine traditional and digital methods, may be more effective in

environments with limited digital literacy and infrastructure. Additionally, careful selection of media types and genres is crucial to maximize the benefits of these activities in diverse educational settings.

Media-based literacy activities have been shown to positively impact various aspects of writing, such as coherence, cohesion, vocabulary, and grammar. These activities leverage the engaging and interactive nature of media to enhance students' writing skills by providing diverse and dynamic learning experiences. Media-based activities, such as those involving social media platforms like Facebook, help students organize and shape their ideas more effectively. This is because these platforms encourage interaction and feedback, which can lead to better structured and more coherent writing (Klimova & Pikhart, 2019). The integration of media in literacy activities supports the connection between students' in-school and out-of-school experiences, fostering a more cohesive understanding of writing as a communicative tool (Falk-Ross & Linder, 2009). The use of media, particularly social media, has been found to improve vocabulary acquisition. This is attributed to the exposure to diverse language inputs and the necessity to engage in meaningful communication, which encourages the use of varied vocabulary (Klimova & Pikhart, 2019). YouTube videos on academic writing provide students with exposure to academic vocabulary and context-specific language, enhancing their vocabulary skills through repeated exposure and application (Olasina, 2017).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the significant positive impact of media literacy-based activities on EFL writing skills. By enhancing coherence, cohesion, vocabulary, grammar, and critical thinking, these activities contribute to the overall development of learners' writing abilities. The findings of this research underscore the importance of integrating media literacy into EFL teaching and learning. By providing learners with opportunities to engage with authentic media texts and analyze their content critically, teachers can create more engaging and effective learning experiences. Further study is needed to investigate the long-term effects and broader applications of media literacy in language education. This includes exploring the potential benefits of media literacy for learners at different levels of proficiency and in various cultural contexts. By continuing to explore the intersection of language learning and media literacy, educators can unlock new possibilities for improving students' writing skills and preparing them for success in the digital age.

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