

TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A CASE STUDY OF THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY BY EFL TEACHERS

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Abstrak

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become an important aspect of English language teaching in the digital era. This study aimed to explore the challenges, benefits, and needs of EFL teachers in using ICT in English classrooms at the junior high school level. A qualitative case study design was employed. The participants were three English teachers from a public junior high school in Malang, Indonesia. Data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers faced several challenges in integrating ICT, including technical problems, limited technological skills, classroom management issues, and time constraints. Despite these challenges, ICT was perceived to increase students' motivation, engagement, and understanding of English materials through the use of audiovisual media and digital platforms. The study also found that teachers needed continuous training, institutional support, and sufficient preparation time to use ICT more effectively. The results suggest that ICT can support English language teaching when supported by adequate facilities and teacher readiness. This study provides insights into teachers' experiences of ICT integration and highlights the importance of practical support in technology-enhanced English instruction.

Keywords: ICT integration; EFL teachers; English language teaching; qualitative case study; junior high school context

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped educational practices, including the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In the digital era, technology is no longer viewed as an optional supplement but as an integral component of instructional practice. English teachers are increasingly expected to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance student engagement, support interactive learning, and improve instructional efficiency. Digital tools such as learning management systems, presentation software, online platforms, and multimedia resources have become common features of contemporary English classrooms.

Despite its pedagogical potential, the integration of ICT in EFL teaching remains uneven and complex. Many teachers continue to face structural and personal challenges that limit the effective use of technology. Previous studies highlight recurring issues such as limited access to digital facilities, unstable internet connectivity, insufficient institutional support, and teachers' lack of confidence in using digital tools (Eryansyah & Erlina, 2023; Saputra et al., 2022). Beyond technical constraints, psychological and emotional factors also influence teachers' readiness to adopt technology. Ubaidillah et al. (2023) reported that teachers often experience stress and emotional

fatigue when adapting to technology-mediated instruction, particularly when expectations exceed available resources. These findings suggest that successful technology integration depends not only on infrastructure but also on teachers' pedagogical preparedness and emotional resilience.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of ICT in English teaching can be examined through the framework of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK). Building on Shulman's (1986) concept of Pedagogical Content Knowledge, Mishra and Koehler (2006) emphasize that effective teaching requires the intersection of content knowledge, pedagogical strategies, and technological competence. In the EFL context, this means that teachers must not only master linguistic content and teaching methods but also understand how to meaningfully incorporate digital tools to support language learning. Studies have shown that teachers' digital readiness and TPACK competence significantly influence how confidently and effectively they use technology in the classroom (Pratolo et al., 2023). However, without adequate training and institutional support, many teachers struggle to achieve this integration in practice.

Empirical research consistently reports that ICT offers substantial benefits for EFL teaching. Technology can promote student-centered learning, increase motivation, and provide access to authentic language input through multimedia resources (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020). Digital platforms also support independent learning and flexible access to materials, allowing students to learn beyond classroom boundaries (Umamah & Cahyono, 2022; Umamah, 2024). Furthermore, tools such as Canva, Quizizz, and Google Classroom enable teachers to design interactive and engaging learning activities, contributing to improved classroom dynamics (Christiana & Anwar, 2021; Yazid et al., 2024). Nevertheless, these benefits are often accompanied by practical limitations, including increased preparation time, classroom management issues, and students' misuse of digital devices for non-academic purposes.

A review of previous studies indicates that most research tends to focus on either the advantages of ICT integration or the challenges faced by teachers, often treating these aspects separately. While several studies have explored teachers' perceptions of technology use (Nomass, 2013; Bui, 2022), few have examined how teachers simultaneously negotiate the benefits, limitations, and practical demands of ICT integration within real classroom contexts, particularly at the junior high school level. Moreover, many studies rely on single data sources, which may not fully capture teachers' actual classroom practices.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how junior high school EFL teachers use ICT in their English classrooms, with particular attention to the challenges they encounter, their experiences of the benefits and limitations of technology, and their perceived needs for more effective ICT integration. By employing a qualitative case study approach that combines interviews, classroom observations, and documentation, this study seeks to provide a contextualized and comprehensive understanding of teachers' experiences in teaching English in the digital era. Accordingly, this study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What challenges do EFL teachers face when using ICT in English language teaching?
2. How do EFL teachers experience and perceive the benefits and limitations of technology in their teaching practices?
3. What do EFL teachers need to use technology more effectively in English language classrooms?

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a case study design to explore EFL teachers' experiences in integrating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows an in-depth examination of participants' perspectives and classroom practices within their real educational context (Creswell, 2014). The case study design enabled the researcher to investigate ICT integration as a bounded phenomenon within a specific junior high school setting.

The study was conducted at a public junior high school in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted of three English teachers who were selected through purposive sampling. The selection criteria included: (1) teaching English at the junior high school level, (2) having a minimum of five years of teaching experience, and (3) actively using ICT in classroom instruction. These criteria ensured that the participants had sufficient experience and relevance to provide rich data related to the research focus.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and documentation to ensure data triangulation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore teachers' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and needs related to ICT integration in English language teaching. Each interview lasted approximately 30–60 minutes and was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to express their ideas comfortably and accurately. All interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Classroom observations were carried out to examine how ICT was implemented during actual teaching and learning activities. The observations focused on the use of digital tools, teacher–student interaction, student engagement, and classroom management during ICT-based instruction. Observation data were recorded using an observation checklist and supported by field notes to capture contextual details.

In addition, relevant documents such as lesson plans and digital teaching materials were collected to support and clarify the interview and observation data. These documents helped provide further insight into how ICT was planned and applied in classroom instruction.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the procedures proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis process involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, identifying and reviewing themes, and interpreting the findings. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documentation were coded to identify recurring patterns related to challenges, benefits, and teachers' needs in using ICT. The themes were refined to ensure alignment with the research questions.

FINDINGS

Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers in Using ICT

The findings indicate that EFL teachers encountered several challenges when integrating ICT into English language teaching. Technical and infrastructural issues were frequently mentioned by the participants. Unstable internet connections and limited access to digital facilities were reported to disrupt teaching activities and reduce instructional effectiveness. One teacher explained:

“Sometimes the internet suddenly goes down during the lesson, so the activity cannot continue as planned.” (T1)

Another major challenge related to teachers’ technological competence. Although the teachers were familiar with basic digital tools, they experienced difficulties when using more advanced applications or handling technical problems during lessons. This situation increased teachers’ anxiety, particularly when unexpected issues occurred in front of students:

“I can use simple applications, but when something goes wrong, I feel confused and it affects my confidence.” (T2)

Classroom management also emerged as a challenge in ICT-based instruction. Teachers reported difficulties in controlling students’ use of digital devices, as some students accessed non-academic content during lessons. Monitoring students’ activities while teaching was described as demanding:

“When students use their phones, it is hard to make sure they only focus on the lesson.” (T3)

Time constraints further complicated ICT integration. Teachers noted that preparing digital materials required more time compared to conventional teaching, while administrative duties limited their preparation time:

“Preparing ICT materials takes longer, and we still have many other school tasks to finish.” (T1)

Teachers’ Perceptions of the Benefits and Limitations of ICT in English Teaching

Despite the challenges, the teachers perceived ICT as beneficial for English language teaching. Increased student engagement was one of the most frequently reported benefits. Teachers observed that students were more motivated and actively participated during ICT-based lessons:

“Students are more enthusiastic when I use videos or online quizzes.” (T2)

ICT was also perceived as helpful in improving students’ understanding of English materials. Audiovisual resources were considered effective in explaining abstract concepts, particularly in vocabulary and pronunciation learning:

“With videos and pictures, students understand the material faster than just listening to explanations.” (T3)

In addition, ICT supported flexible and independent learning. Teachers reported that students could access materials outside classroom hours, allowing them to review lessons independently:

“They can open the materials again at home, so learning is not only in the classroom.” (T1)

However, teachers also acknowledged several limitations. Unequal access to devices and internet connectivity outside school affected students’ participation in ICT-based assignments:

“Not all students have good internet access at home, so sometimes they cannot complete the tasks.” (T2)

Teachers also expressed concern that excessive technology use could reduce direct interaction if not properly controlled.

Teachers' Needs for More Effective Use of ICT in English Classrooms

The findings revealed that teachers expressed clear needs to improve the effectiveness of ICT integration. Continuous professional development was identified as a primary need. Teachers emphasized the importance of practical training focused on classroom applications:

"We need training that shows how to use technology directly in teaching, not only theory."

(T3)

Institutional support was also considered essential. Teachers highlighted the need for stable internet access, adequate facilities, and technical assistance from schools:

"If the school provides better facilities and support, we will be more confident using ICT."

(T1)

Additionally, teachers expressed the need for sufficient preparation time. Reducing administrative workload was viewed as necessary to allow teachers to design meaningful ICT-based materials:

"If we have more time to prepare, the use of technology will be more effective." (T2)

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the use of ICT in English language teaching provides both benefits and challenges for EFL teachers. These findings support previous studies that highlight ICT as a useful tool in language learning, while also pointing out practical difficulties faced by teachers in classroom implementation.

The challenges related to technical issues, such as unstable internet connections and limited facilities, are consistent with earlier research (Eryansyah & Erlina, 2023; Saputra et al., 2022). These problems often interrupted the teaching process and made teachers less confident in using ICT regularly. This indicates that school infrastructure plays an important role in supporting the successful use of technology in English classrooms.

In addition, teachers' limited technological skills affected their confidence when using ICT. Although teachers were able to use basic digital tools, they experienced difficulties when facing technical problems during lessons. This finding is in line with the TPACK framework proposed by Mishra and Koehler (2006), which emphasizes that effective teaching requires the integration of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. When teachers lack sufficient technological knowledge, the use of ICT becomes less effective, as also reported by Pratolo et al. (2023).

Classroom management was another challenge identified in this study. Teachers found it difficult to control students' use of digital devices during ICT-based activities. Some students were distracted by non-academic content, which reduced learning focus. This finding supports Ubaidillah et al. (2023), who noted that technology use may increase teachers' workload and emotional pressure if classroom control is not well managed.

Despite these challenges, the findings show that ICT had positive effects on students' learning. Teachers observed that students were more motivated and actively involved in lessons when ICT was used. This supports previous studies suggesting that digital tools can increase student engagement and create a more interesting learning environment (Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020; Christiana & Anwar, 2021). Teachers also reported that audiovisual materials helped students understand English content more easily, especially in vocabulary and pronunciation learning, as noted by Nomass (2013).

The findings also show that ICT supported flexible learning, allowing students to access materials outside the classroom. This is consistent with Umamah and Cahyono (2022) and Umamah (2024), who found that digital platforms help students review learning materials independently. However, limited access to devices and internet connectivity at home reduced the effectiveness of ICT-based learning for some students. This shows that unequal access remains an important issue in technology-supported education.

Teachers also expressed the need for training and institutional support to improve their use of ICT. This finding supports Bui (2022), who emphasized the importance of practical training in helping teachers use technology more effectively. Teachers also needed more time to prepare ICT-based materials, as administrative tasks often limited their preparation time. Without sufficient support and time, teachers may not be able to use ICT to its full potential.

Overall, this study shows that ICT can support English language teaching by increasing student engagement and improving learning experiences. However, its effectiveness depends on teachers' technological skills, classroom management, and institutional support. Therefore, ICT should be used as a supporting tool in teaching, not as the main focus, to ensure that learning objectives can be achieved effectively.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching at the junior high school level. The findings show that ICT plays an important role in supporting English teaching and learning, particularly in increasing student engagement, motivation, and understanding of learning materials. The use of digital tools such as audiovisual media and online platforms helped create a more interesting and interactive learning environment.

However, the study also found several challenges in the implementation of ICT. Technical problems, limited internet access, and teachers' limited technological skills affected the effectiveness of ICT use in the classroom. In addition, classroom management issues and limited preparation time made it difficult for teachers to fully integrate technology into their teaching practices. These challenges indicate that the use of ICT in English teaching requires not only technology availability but also teacher readiness and institutional support.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that ICT can be effectively used in English language teaching when supported by adequate facilities, continuous teacher training, and sufficient preparation time. Schools are encouraged to provide better infrastructure and practical training to help teachers use technology more confidently and effectively. Teachers are also expected to use ICT as a supporting tool that aligns with instructional goals rather than as the main focus of instruction.

This study was limited to a small number of participants in one school context, which may limit the generalization of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants and different educational settings to provide a more comprehensive understanding of ICT integration in English language teaching. Further studies may also explore students' perspectives and learning outcomes to complement teachers' experiences and perceptions.

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