

## 59. Determining the role of digital literacy in EFL teaching concerning the views of Turkish EFL Teachers<sup>1</sup>

Kwestan Hussein AHMED<sup>2</sup>

Seçil TÜMEN AKYILDIZ<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

The use of digital technologies in English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching has not been addressed enough. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the significance of digital technology and digital literacy in EFL field. This study aims at finding out EFL in-service secondary school (SS) and high school (HS) teachers' views on the role of digital literacy in their EFL teaching; revealing the level of EFL teachers' digital literacy and its effects on their teaching, and understanding the facilities of the digital tools and challenges in EFL teachers' instructions. Further, this study aims to examine the difference between the thoughts of SS teachers and HS teachers about the role of digital literacy in EFL. To achieve these aims, this study utilized a qualitative paradigm to determine the role of digital literacy in EFL classes concerning the views of Turkish EFL teachers, and their perceptions about digital teaching and learning tools in their instruction. First it was found that HS teachers knew the term digital literacy more than the SS teachers. Both SS and HS teachers were confident using digital tools and being digitally literate although some of them could not define the term properly. Secondly digital literacy was claimed to have positive effects on language teaching. Thirdly, all the participants agreed with the fact that the innovations of the digital technologies facilitated their language instruction. Lastly, digital tools had many challenges due to some problems besides their advantages. All in all, when taken together, the results of this study confirmed the vital role of digital literacy in EFL teaching in the digital age that teachers should acquire and use it actively. Therefore, EFL teachers should incorporate digital literacy in using different digital technologies such as Web 2 tools having several facilities into their instructions. The EFL teachers also admitted the need for trainings and seminars to help them using those tools and become digital natives.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, English as a foreign language teaching (EFL), digital technologies

### İngilizce öğretmenlerinin görüşlerine göre yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretiminde dijital okuryazarlığın rolünün belirlenmesi

### Öz

Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL) öğretiminde dijital teknolojilerin kullanımı konusu yeterince ele alınmamıştır. COVID-19 pandemisi yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi alanında dijital teknolojinin ve dijital okuryazarlığın önemini gözler önüne sermiştir. Bu noktadan hareketle bu çalışma ortaokul

<sup>1</sup> \* Bu çalışma 1. yazarın yüksek lisans tez çalışmasından türetilmiştir.

<sup>2</sup> YL Öğrencisi, Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsani ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD (Elazığ, Türkiye), kwstanenglish@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8403-8529 [Araştırma makalesi, Makale kayıt tarihi: 29.06.2022-kabul tarihi: 20.08.2022; DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.1164991]

<sup>3</sup> Doç. Dr., Fırat Üniversitesi, İnsani ve Sosyal Bilimler Fakültesi, Batı Dilleri ve Edebiyatları Bölümü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı ABD (Elazığ, Türkiye), stakyildiz@firat.edu.tr, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4116-7344

ve lise düzeyinde çalışmakta olan İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dijital okuryazarlığın İngilizce öğretimindeki rolünü belirlemek üzere görüşlerini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, İngilizce öğretmenlerinin dijital okuryazarlık seviyeleri ve bu seviyelerin öğretimlerindeki etkileri ile dijital teknolojilerin kullanımlarının getirdiđi olumlu ve olumsuz yönler ortaya çıkarılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bunlara ek olarak ortaokul ve lise öğretmenleri arasında bahsi geçen kavramlar bağlamında fark olup olmadığı da aydınlatılmaya çalışılmıştır. Bu amaçlara ulaşmak için, bu çalışmada nitel bir paradigma kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sonucunda öncelikle lise düzeyinde çalışan öğretmenlerin ortaokul düzeyinde çalışanlara göre dijital okuryazarlık kavramını daha iyi bildikleri, iki grup öğretmenin de dijital teknolojileri rahat bir şekilde kullanabildikleri belirlenmiştir. İkinci olarak, dijital okuryazarlığın yabancı dil öğretiminde olumlu etkileri olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Üçüncü olarak arařtırmaya katılan tüm öğretmenlerin üzerinde mutabık oldukları bir durum da dijital teknolojilerin dil öğretimini kolaylařtırdığıdır. Son olarak birçok avantajı bulunmasına rağmen dijital teknolojilerin bazı dezavantajlarının da bulunduđu belirlenmiştir. Sonuç olarak tüm sonuçlar göz önüne alındığında dijital okuryazarlığın yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretiminde çok önemli bir yere sahip olduğu ve de öğretmenlerinin bu beceriyi etkili bir şekilde kullanmaları gerektiđi ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmenlerin Web 2 araçları gibi farklı teknolojilerle derslerini çeşitlendirmelerinin ve de bu alanda öğretmenlerde var olan eksiklikleri gidermek için yapılacak eğitimlerin faydalı olacağı gibi önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Dijital okuryazarlık, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretimi, dijital teknolojiler

## Introduction

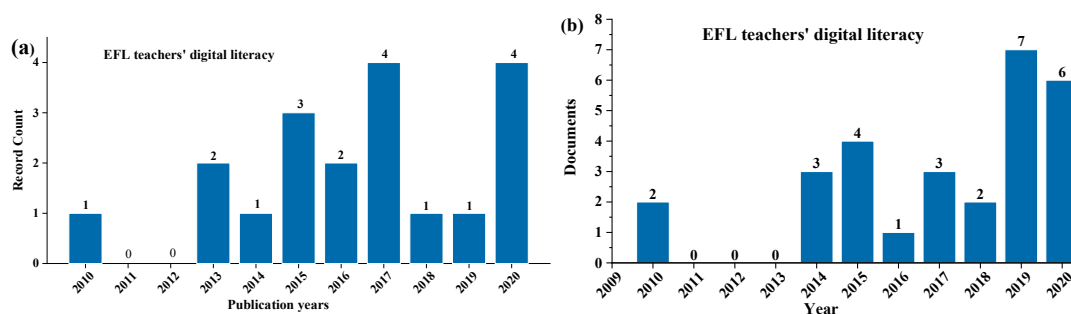
The use of technological devices in the educational institutions, workplaces and houses are widespread and have become an integral part of everyday life. Daily tasks have been influenced by communication technologies. Individuals need to use information and communication technologies (ICT) to administer information, communicate to the others and discover the world. These modern technologies are necessary to improve the quality of life as well as education. Therefore, modern people need to be digitally literate, which is reinforced by the extensive improvement and use of modern ICTs. So digital technologies are needed to be researched in terms of education since the adaptation of them has transformed the whole educational paradigm. The growth of modern ICTs requires people to be equipped necessary skills and competencies to cope with the rapid change in the field. Those skills are addressed as digital literacy skills (Reddy & Sharma, 2020) which have become one of the main competencies of this century (Cisotto & Pupolin, 2018). Digital literacy therefore, was defined by the European Commission as the potential to use ICTs and internet to acquire the skills and knowledge vital to survive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It can also be defined as the awareness about how to use the digital technology effectively (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006), safely, wisely and productively (Dudeney & Hockly, 2016).

The use of ICTs in educational environments helps the stakeholders to raise the standard of education and enrich the learning experience (Cullen, 2017; Sharma & Reddy, 2015). The progress of such technological advancements including the use of television, computer, mobile, smartphones, and tablets, expand the opportunities to learn and the exchange of information and resources on individuals' literacy strategies (Arnone & Wagner, 2011; Linda, 2008). According to Sarkar (2012) the role of instructors as the center and authority of traditional educational model has changed to the facilitator and guide by the use of ICTs besides the role of learners from the passive recipients to active participants. Ilomaki (2008) also emphasized that technology skills are vital ones for teachers internalizing the role

of being facilitator, to scaffold their students. In certain modern industrial countries, innovations of technologies have become almost widespread for foreign language teaching as well (Golonka et al., 2014). In this digital era, so many useful tools, platforms, and applications are available that language teachers have managed to use via computer and smartphone in their instruction (Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Kukulska-Hulme et al., 2017). It is a well-known fact that technological innovations facilitate language teaching and learning (Choi & Chung, 2021). Likewise, instructors are expected to be familiar with the current technological tools and investigate them effectively in their instructions. The use of smartphones effectively covers the opportunity for a better learner-centered setting. Thus, it cannot be ignored how digital technologies no matter they are old or new manage language activities (Levy, 2009). Digital technologies are particularly necessary for the societies in which there is insufficient exposure to the target language. That is why using them in teaching foreign languages and being literate to use them correctly are essential issues.

COVID19 pandemic made side effects in all sectors of everyday life, especially the education field and the whole world moved towards online education which it may continue for years. Therefore, it can also be stated that the pandemic has highlighted the significance of digital tools and being digitally literate in learning and teaching. Nash (2020) highlighted the fact that teachers who lack digital literacy skill found accessing information online very difficult through the pandemic remote education period. However, Sánchez-Cruzado, Santiago Campión and Sánchez-Compañía (2021) stated that educators oblige to be digitally literate to help students learn a foreign language since digital literacy provides teachers a wide range of resources about language teaching. Therefore, keeping with the technological developments necessitates that language teachers should scaffold their students to improve themselves to use digital devices in language learning (Purnama, Ulfah, Machali, Wibowo & Narmaditya, 2021) From this point forth, the researchers of the current study wanted to reveal whether the Turkish EFL teachers can use digital tools in their instruction sufficiently or they need further training as well as their digital literacy level affects positively to their instruction or not.

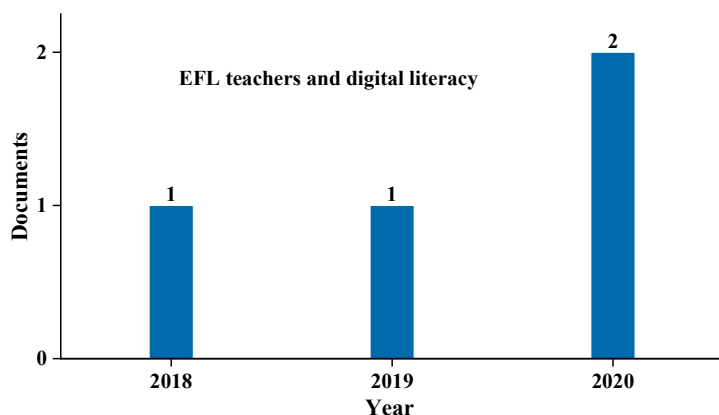
The investigation of two different databases (Web of Science and SCOPUS) for indexing articles has shown that there are few studies on EFL teachers' digital literacy during the last ten years. Figure 1 (accessed on 5th Feb 2021) (a) shows the publication years from 2010 to 2020



**Figure 1.** (a & b) Source "SCOPUS" and "Web of Science" Keywords "EFL teachers, digital literacy"

Figure 1 (a) shows the publication years from 2010 to 2020 indexed by Web of Science, and Figure 1 (b) shows the publication year of SCOPUS during the last ten years until 2020 searching with keywords "EFL teachers' digital literacy". Despite the importance of it, so far, very little attention has been paid to the digital literacy levels of EFL teachers. As it has also shown in Figure 2 (accessed on 5<sup>th</sup> of February),

the publication year of SCOPUS from 2010 there are only three studies, searching the title of “EFL teachers’ digital literacy”. EFL teachers and digital literacy.



**Figure 2.** EFL teachers and digital literacy

Firstly, this research intended to find out EFL in-service secondary school (SS) and high school (HS) teachers’ views on the role of digital literacy in their EFL teaching. Secondly, it aimed at revealing the level of EFL teachers’ digital literacy and its effects on their teaching. Lastly, it intended to understand the facilities of the digital tools and challenges in EFL teachers’ instructions. Therefore, this study aimed to achieve a more critical view on EFL teachers’ understanding of digital literacy addressing the following research questions:

1. What does the term digital literacy mean for (secondary & high) school EFL teachers?
2. How does the digital literacy level of (secondary & high) school EFL teachers affect their teaching?
3. What are the facilities of using digital tools in (secondary & high) school level of EFL teaching?
4. What are the challenges of using digital tools in secondary & high school level of EFL teaching?

The outcomes of the present research are expected to contribute to the field with their realistic perspective.

## Methodology

Qualitative research intends to investigate human experience through a wide perspective which provides testing new hypotheses (Burns & Grove, 2003). Achieving depth insights of a group of teachers of having experience related to the selected topic qualitative research was chosen for the present study which is supported by Corbin & Strauss, (2008); Levitt and his colleagues, (2017) and Manu (2018). It identifies Turkish EFL teachers’ understanding and practices of digital literacy.

## Participants

The sample of the present study was 18 Turkish EFL teachers; nine teachers working in SS and nine teachers working in high state schools, randomly chosen in Elazığ, a city located in the East Anatolian Region of Turkey. They have been teaching from 5th to 12th grade. For the SS teachers’ discussion, nine

teachers (eight females and one male) participated in a Zoom meeting for one hour and a half; for the HS teachers' discussion nine teachers (seven females and two males) participated in an online Zoom meeting for one hour and a half. The sampling method used in this study was non-probability and convenience sampling. The study was conducted at the time of Covid-19 pandemic shutdown that is why convenience sampling was the most suitable one to collect the sample for the study.

### **Data collection instrument**

Focus group discussion seeks to obtain and discover participants' opinions, views, and knowledge about the selected topic. Accordingly, data were collected using focus group discussions to explore the role of digital literacy and aims for using digital tools, facilities, and challenges in EFL teaching, which may be difficult to achieve in responses to direct interview questions as supported by Kitzinger, (1995); Krueger, (2014); Krueger & Casey, (2000) and Onwuegbuzie and others (2009).

The participants are able to freely express their opinions without being forced to say or not to say any ideas in focus group discussions (FGD) (Morse et al., 2002). It is also attractive and enjoyable for the participants (Dawson et al., 1993). The FGD facilitate the researchers to reach a variety of interaction styles that individuals use in their daily life, like stories, jokes, and debates (Krueger, 2014), so they contained interesting and exchanging opinions among the participants. In the light of the above scholars' points of view, the FGD were chosen and the data was collected via focus group discussions. One of the FGD contained nine EFL SS teachers while the other had nine EFL HS teachers. The moderator of the present study who managed the Zoom meetings focus group discussion was aware of how to conduct and control the discussion in a very proper way and the participant was very comfortable expressing whatever they want to say about the selected subject. The interviews were held in the Turkish language, the reason for conducting in the Turkish language was to create a more comfortable atmosphere for the sample of the study to express themselves freely. Last and most importantly, the moderator was aware and acknowledged how to be respectful enough and friendly with the respondents as Morse and his colleagues (2002) suggested.

### **Data collection procedure**

After determining the way of data collection, a question pool was created to investigate the related literature. Then the questions were consulted by two academics working at Faculty of Education in Firat University. They ensured the scope and appropriateness of the questions for the research. Having their suggestions, the questions were revised accordingly. Finally, the last form of the questions was prepared. Two focus group discussions were held via online Zoom meetings with the participation of the researchers and a moderator to meet the reliability of the study. The time when this study had been conducted, was the Coronavirus period, so the focus group discussions were held via online Zoom meetings (Lowenthal et al., 2020), which is a free HD application for meeting online, where the participants cannot be together face to face. Similarly, Zoom could be a well-developed alternative for collecting the participants in real-time to discuss the topic (Gunawan et al., 2021). Furthermore, the Zoom meetings of the focus group interviews were recorded and stored for providing trustworthiness of the present study as Krueger and Casey (2002) recommended (Krueger & Casey, 2002).

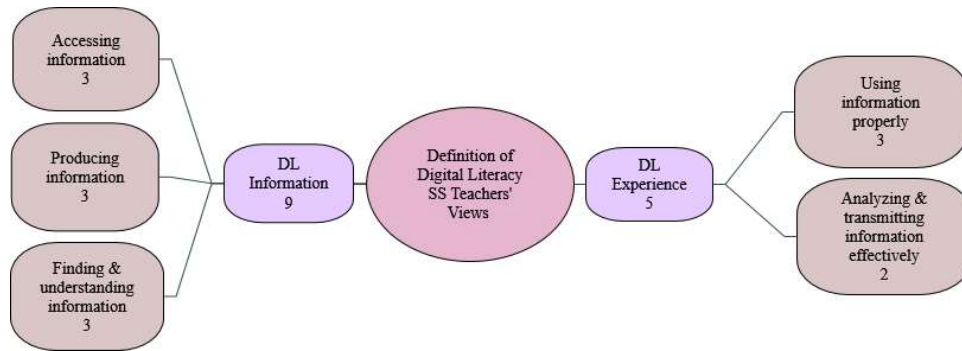
### **Data analysis**

For the analysis of the data content analysis was chosen, as it has a vital and long history in social science studies (Krippendorff, 2004). First, the respondents' speeches were converted into text form and reviewed by the researchers. Next, the Turkish context was proofread by three native speakers. Respondents' texts were then sent to them ensure the reliability of the original data and recordings; this process is supported by Morse et al., (2002). Finally, the data were translated into English and sent to three other academics to review. The software application used in the present study was Nvivo 12, which enables researchers to organize and analyse a wide range of the data, such as records, pictures, audio, video, questionnaires, and web/social media contents (Edhlund & McDougall, 2019). Moreover, this software computer Programme makes the analysis process easier, methodic and attentive. For the privacy of the respondents, personal details are not provided. Instead, the abbreviations were set for the name of the respondents as the SS teacher (ST1), the second HS teacher (HT2), and it continues respectively to the rest for both groups of respondents.

## Findings and results

*Research Question (RQ)1. What does digital literacy mean to EFL teachers?*

*a. What does digital literacy mean to SS EFL teachers?*

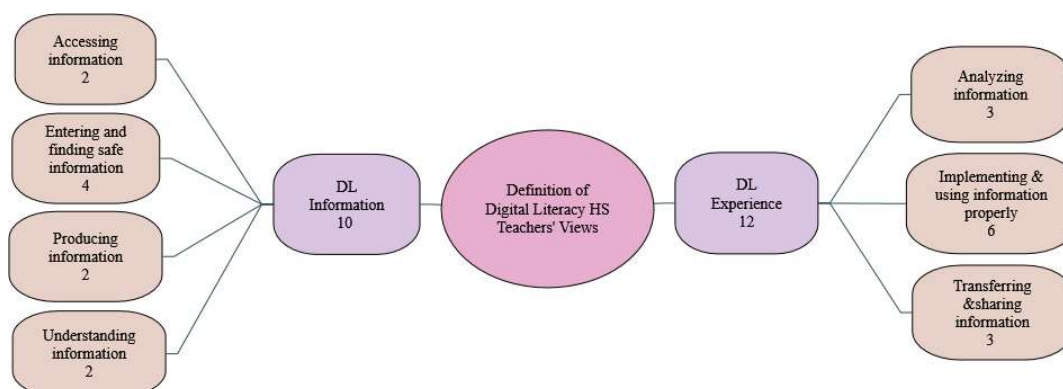


**Figure 4.** SS Teachers' Definition of Digital Literacy

The categories for the definition of digital literacy are 'Digital literacy experience' and 'Digital literacy information'. For the first category digital experience, two codes were assigned (f=5), which are 'using information properly' (f=3) and 'analysing and transmitting information effectively' (f=2). Also for the second category 34 digital information, three main codes were observed (f=9) including 'accessing information' (f=3), 'producing information' (f=3), and the last code 'finding & understanding information' (f=3). Some of the SS EFL teachers who participated in the present study defined digital literacy as a 'digital literacy experience', they believed that a digitally literate person is someone who has experience with digital innovations. For instance, ST1 defined digital literacy as "Digital literacy refers to the use of technological elements in the acquisition, sharing and transmitting knowledge. In fact, in my point of view, it is important how we use technologies in our life which is called digital literacy. Of course, first, we think about getting information, but how well we use it properly is also significant for us". ST9 insisted that "digital literacy means the ability to use information in the digital environment, to understand, to grasp, and at the same time to create content. When I think digitally as a teacher, I can think of using digital media efficiently". Accordingly, ST5 revealed that "Digital literacy is dealing with accessing and using information with technological tools, which means that we can use all kinds of technological devices with the development of technology. Accordingly, how well we can use them is

important, and this is not only for computers but for tablets, phones are also available in a variety of digital tools”. Some of the SS teacher respondents of the present study also focused on ‘digital literacy information’. ST5 defined digital literacy as “Digital literacy is dealing with accessing and using information with technological tools, which means that we can use all kinds of technological devices with the development of technology. How well we can use them is important, and this is not only for computers but for tablets, phones are also available in a variety of digital tools”. ST6 as well as declared that digital literacy is “I can describe digital literacy as accessing or sharing information with others through technological devices. The important thing is how skilled you are at obtaining and sharing the information you have achieved. That is one of the requirements of this century. In fact, since we are in the age of technology, so we need to be digitally literate”. Moreover, ST7 also defined digital literacy as “I think that digital literacy is the ability to produce, share, and maintain information with the use of technological tools along with their use”. Two of the teachers insisted that digital literacy is as important as normal literacy, e.g. ST3 mentioned that “For me, digital literacy referring to one of the needs of the 21st century. I can say that digital literacy is a set of knowledge and skills that enable us to live in this increasingly digitalized world, to be a part of this new life, to develop ourselves in this digital life, to learn, to establish cause-effect relationships, and to produce. And this skill is as important to literacy as we know it right now”. Also, ST8 said “I think that digital literacy is as important as normal literacy, because in the changing and developing world. Technology is everywhere in our life, therefore, it is required for us to use technological tools such as computers, tablets, and phones to access and share information”.

b. What does digital literacy mean to HS EFL teachers?



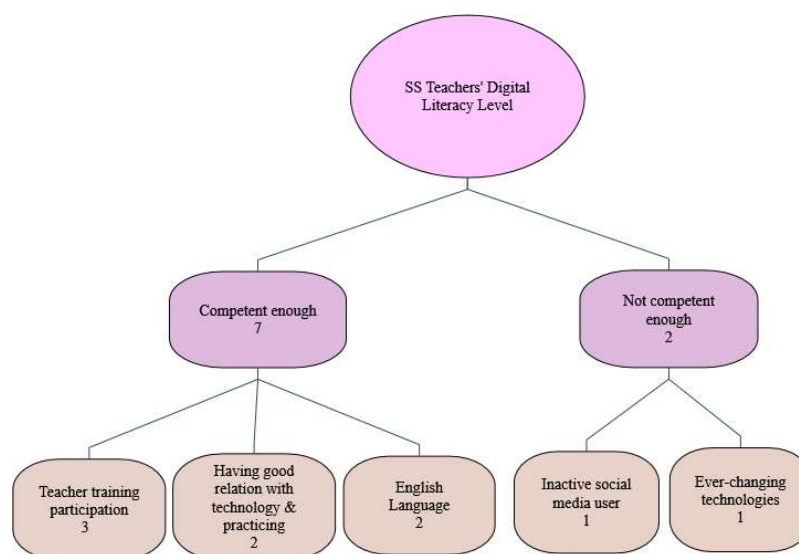
**Figure 5.** HS Teachers' Definition of Digital Literacy

According to the results obtained from the data analysis of the definition of digital literacy by HS teachers ( $f=22$ ), two main categories were created including ‘Digital literacy experience’ and “Digital literacy information”. For ‘digital literacy experience’ ( $f=12$ ) three codes were created according to the results such as ‘analysing information’ ( $f=3$ ), ‘implementing & using information properly’, and ‘transferring & sharing information’ ( $f=3$ ). Besides, for the second category, ‘digital literacy information’ ( $f=10$ ), four main codes were discovered, including ‘accessing information’ ( $f=2$ ), ‘entering and finding safe information’ ( $f=4$ ), ‘producing information’ ( $f=2$ ), and ‘understanding information’. Most of the HS teacher samples of this study were insisted on the digital literacy experience and having information rather than just reading and writing online. As specified by HT1 “Digital literacy is the ability to use and utilize devices with internet connectivity such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and to find, understand and share much different information with the help of these devices. Finally, actively

transfer them to students in order to share information”. As also claimed by HT3 “In my opinion, digital literacy means being able to understand and use the information in digital environments and to implement it effectively. Although we were not born in a digital environment, we are currently trying to be digitally literate. In summary, I can define digital literacy as obtaining and using information correctly through a tablet, phone, computer, and Web 2.0 tools”. HT5 “In my opinion, digital literacy means using and analysing all technological tools in this digital age, and to be able to integrate the more useful ones into everyday life and education system”. HT8 “Digital literacy is very important for us to be able to transfer the information in the digital environment to our students in the best way. Since so much information is available on the internet or from other Google search engine, I can sort them in the best way and distinguish which ones are useful for our students and which ones are not, and accordingly, I can define them by transferring the information in the best way”. Answers for digital information (f=10), ten comments were perceived as believed by some of the HS teacher respondents. HT2 “in my opinion digital literacy means the ability to make effective use of digital tools in our distance or face-to-face education, and also, to be aware which digital tool we can use for which skill. Most importantly, to be able to choose the sufficient and necessary tool according to the capacity and perception of our students”. HT4 “In parallel with technological developments, all of these smart devices that we currently use like the ability to produce, find, analyse or use information together with all of them”. HT6 “I can define digital literacy as access to use Web 2.0 tools, smartphones, computers, tablets, etc. Since all the devices are connected to the internet and entered into our lives quickly and rapidly with this distance education and coronavirus period. Therefore, we have to develop the ability to understand internet devices correctly in the teaching process. Moreover, we need to teach our students how to use these digital tools safely and properly for the learning purpose”. As claimed by HT7 digital literacy is “digital literacy can be described as the ability to access, analyse, produce, and share information with all kinds of smart devices in a proper way. In fact, for me, digital literacy sounds like the Noah's Flood in the education field. In other words, it is like a process that we are starting to go back completely from the first point. As it's clear, digital technologies are advancing so we need to practice more, and sometimes I feel foreign for some innovations so we are trying to progress ourselves to be digitally literate teachers”. The last definition according to HT9 for digital literacy is that “digital literacy means to be able to enter safely in virtual environments and use it most beneficially. Likewise, finding the right information is so important in this digital era”.

*RQ2. How does the digital literacy level of (secondary & high) school EFL teachers affect their teaching?*

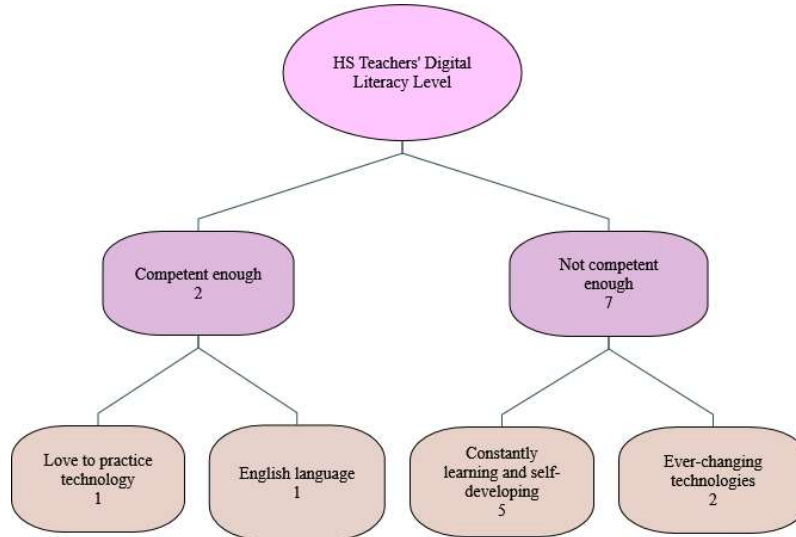




**Figure 10.** SS teachers' digital literacy level

Figure 10 shows the results of the fifth interview question for the SS teachers in this study, which confirms their digital literacy level. Two basic categories were discovered after the analysis of data. Examining the SS teachers' answers for the first category was recognized as "competent enough" (f=11) and 'not competent enough' (f=2). According to the responses of the SS teachers when asked about their degree of digital literacy, the majority of them, approximately seven teachers, stated that they are sufficient and competent enough when utilizing digital tools. They also revealed some reasons for their being competent digital literacy level which is (f=11). Apart from that, only two of the teachers insisted that they are not competent enough, which revealed reasons for not being competent enough (f=2). The first category was found competent enough (f=7), with its three main codes, according to the data evaluated for this interview question. The first code that was mentioned by three of the teachers is 'teacher training participation' (f=3). Accordingly, they claimed that because they had participated in teacher training courses, they had a high digital literacy level, therefore, they feel competent enough. ST3 stated, "I feel competent enough. Openly, I find my digital literacy level sufficient. I say this by comparing myself with the environment and people around me, because usually when my colleagues are in a place where they hang out like that. Of course, digital literacy is not just using this device or using an application as we said, but it was something more general. I used to use every feature of the ZOOM, and I found myself sufficient in this respect. The Ministry of National Education published a digital literacy feature guide and teacher training courses for teachers. I think this guide and courses are something that shows my new level of digital literacy. But of course, there is also more to be literate, since the digital world is a world that is constantly being renewed, i.e., it does not mean that being enough today will be enough tomorrow. Of course, we are constantly in exploration. I also think we need to be in continuous improvement. Finally, if I am not a digitally literate teacher, I would not attend seminars to improve my digital literacy level and would not integrate the recommended digital tools mentioned in these seminars into my lessons. Thanks to the seminars I attended, I became aware of several digital tools that I mentioned above, and thanks to my own research and curiosity I became aware of some of them". ST4 declared "I feel competent enough. I am currently working on a digital content development commission. If you had asked before the training course, in fact, I did not feel that enough, but now we have produced and produced and reached more both written and visual. It really is becoming a part of my life. I know these kind of things, that's why I can say I feel competent". ST5

pointed out, “In my undergraduate degree, we took three semesters of practical learning, which had an undeniable effect in every sense for having a good level of digital literacy”. The second code and the reason for being competent enough, according to the teachers' answers created as ‘having good relation with technology and practicing’ (f=2), which is the most highlighted factor mentioned by the teachers. Accordingly, ST5 considered “I have always had a good relationship with technology, and in my undergraduate degree, we took three semesters of practical learning, which had an undeniable effect in every sense. I am interested in digital literacy, and I would like to master it. I believe that technological features make my job, my profession, or my personal work easier in daily life. That's why I am trying to learn everything that makes the job easier in a complete pragmatist way. I also try to learn more. I consider myself competent in this sense, therefore I choose to be competent enough”. ST9 indicated, “I feel competent enough when I think about accessing, producing, and sharing information. I am a member of many channels on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, so as a teacher, I think that in my lessons or my social life, I have quickly accessed any digital innovation, digital situation, or any other information that could be useful for me through these channels. That's why I think my digital literacy is at a good level”. The third and the last code that was created for the category of ‘competent enough’ was ‘English language’ (f=2). ST1 remarked, “I can say think my digital literacy level is good and I choose the option of competent enough. I think we're good at it, whether at school or in our life. As an English language teacher, I think language is one of the factors that makes us really good users of digital technologies. In this regard, I feel sufficient”. T8 stated “Yes, I feel competent enough, in terms of reaching and spreading information, because knowing the language can give us a lot of advantages. That's why I think I am at a good point”.

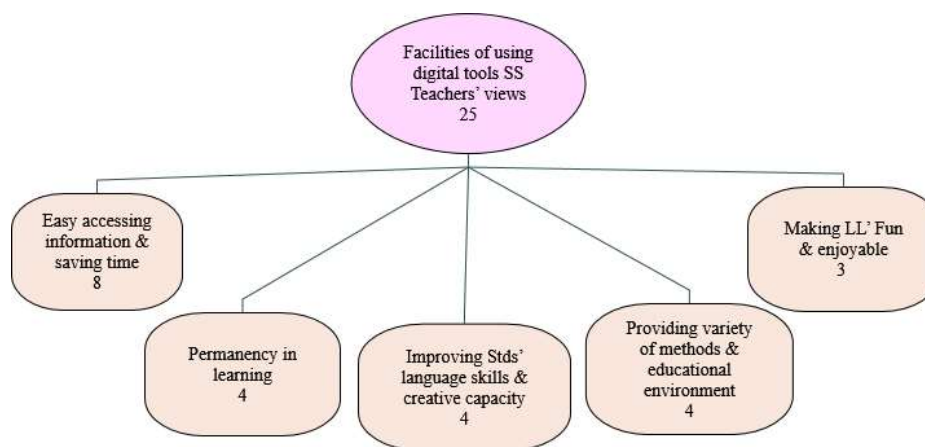


**Figure 11.** HS teachers' digital literacy level

Observing the analysis of the data and the findings showed that most of the HS teachers in this study insisted on ‘not feeling competent enough’. Several possible factors for this finding have been realized which can be addressed based on the teachers' explanations. One of the possible satisfactory explanations for the HS teachers that they did not feel competent enough was due to the ever-changing technologies nowadays they required more and more practice. Another possible reason for this was that they insisted on constantly learning and developing their digital skills. The majority of the HS teachers of the study highlighted the fact that they did not feel competent enough (f=7). 54 For the first category,

two codes were formed as 'love to practice technology' (f=1). HT1 noted "I can say I am competent enough user of digital tools nowadays, I think the reason is that we are English language teachers and we can find anything with the help of the English language". The second code 'English language' (f=1) was also indicated by one of the teachers. HT5 claimed "I want to say option A which is competent enough because I love working with lots of technological tools. As English teachers, we have to be digitally literate. In this case, I find myself competent enough due to more practicing on technological devices and tools". Apart from that, two main codes were created for the second category: 'constantly learning and self-developing' (f=5) and 'ever-changing technologies' (f=2). Five of the teachers insisted on constant learning and self-development. HT3 indicated "I feel, I am neither competent enough, nor incompetent, so I can say that I am in between competent and incompetent because in my opinion we need constantly learning and developing due to the innovations of technologies". HT4 stated "Actually, I have to say that between being competent and not competent is developing because in this digital era everything is not static especially for education. So, we are all need constantly learn and devdevelopHT6 noted "I do not say option A. I mean, I do not say that I am very good, but my husband helps me a lot since he has taught me more about digital tools. I choose between A and B. I think there is still much more to learn about digital literacy". HT7 said "I can say something between competent and not competent enough, the reason is that we as a teacher need more learning about new digital tools so in this way I cannot say I am competent". HT9 stated, "To be honest, I cannot say the option of being competent enough exactly, but it is so close to A, although I work with digital tools daily, still we need more to be literate, that is why I choose neutrality". The second code is 'ever-changing technologies' which was claimed by two of the teachers. HT2 clarified, "I can say that I am not very competent enough and not very incompetent, so I can feel neutral in using digital tools as it is clear the technologies are progressing so we need more and more practices to be competent enough and use them well in our instruction". HT8 stated, "I do not feel competent enough, and also because of the corona period, we have all developed our digital literacy, but with the advances of new technologies and ever-changing of such digital devices and tools we still have a long way to go and more to learn".

*RQ3. What are the facilities of using digital tools in (secondary & high) school level of EFL teaching?*

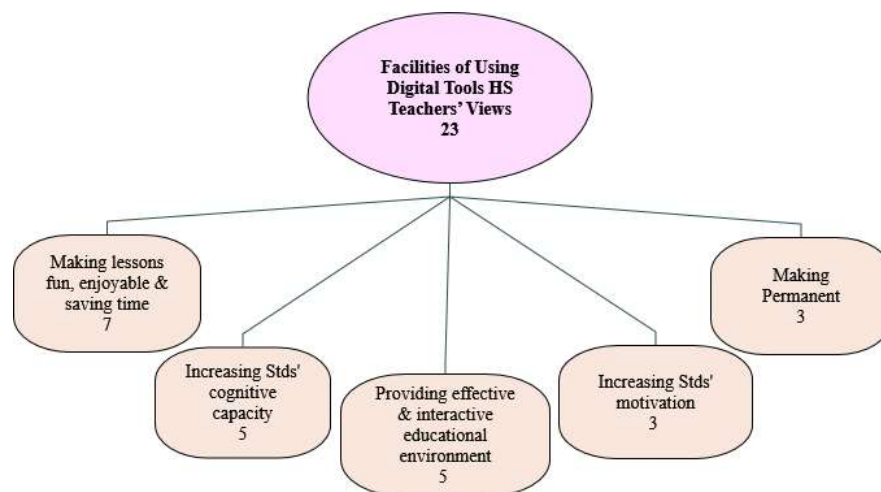


**Figure12.** Facilities of using digital tools SS teachers views

Figure 12 depicts the results of the ninth interview question for SS teachers, along with the codes. Twenty-five comments (f=25) were detected according to the responses of the SS teachers of the study about the capabilities of digital tools, and six codes were disclosed based on their responses to this

interview topic. As stated by the teachers 'Easy accessing information & saving time' (f=8), mostly focused by the teachers. ST1 announced "I can declare that with the help of digital tools we can access information easier, therefore, it saves time, for example, my and the 6 th -grade students are working and writing very slowly, especially in the lessons. When 64 they say we write at home, I take the photo of the board and send it to WhatsApp groups, then they say we will write at home, so I can save time in this way. Or, for example, when I want to do an activity in a classroom tomorrow, I share materials in the WhatsApp groups the students will pass on it in this way they would be more prepared for the lesson. In this way, of course, our lesson is more enjoyable and understandable. Finally, I can point out that digital tools enable us to access information faster and share it more easily. This has a positive impact on saving time and energy". ST4 "with the help of such digital tools I can access information in a short time, therefore it saves time for me as a teacher". ST7 indicated, "In my points of view one of the biggest benefits is that it saves time for us using digital tools in the way that we can access information faster and share to students easily". With reference to, 'providing a variety of methods & educational environment' (f=4), and making the language lesson fun and enjoyable (f=3) was highlighted by the teachers such as ST1 stated "I can observe that digital tools make the lessons more enjoyable. Digital tools facilities in my opinion make the lesson enjoyable, fun, and understandable as I send students' assignments before the lesson time, or during the lesson, we try some enjoyable games that lead to understanding easily with the help of such beneficial platforms such as Web 2.0 Tools". ST3 claimed the fact that "There should be a variety of methods and techniques in foreign language teaching, which the digital tools can provide this. It is useful for developing the four well-known skills. They can be used at every stage of the lesson. They are easy to use and provide teacher convenience. It allows you to create your own materials based on the needs or levels of your students. Its individuality and flexibility in learning provide freedom". ST4 mentioned "since we use different learning techniques, the students can learn the subjects better, and the lessons can be made more fun, this is one of its benefits. Meanwhile, we use different learning techniques, the students know the subjects better, and lessons can be made more fun, therefore this is one of its benefits. For example, if I mention EBA when you use the digital tool like ZOOM for larger audiences, one of its biggest advantages is that it can be a class for you, the table you sit on, which is flexible so that you are very independent of where you are or what you do. In such a way, in my opinion, an appropriate educational environment is created for everyone". ST7 noted, "Digital tools make language lesson easy, fun, and enjoyable because the students also get extra information 65 that they can not get from the teacher or only from the textbook, or I have seen it as an extra method". In terms of the last two codes including 'improving language skills and creative capacity' (f=4), and 'permanency in learning' (f=4) some of the teachers talked about the significance of language skills and permanency in the learning process for instance ST1 and ST4 claimed: "digital tools can provide permanency in learning especially when we use new applications or new activity". ST3 declared "It is useful for developing the four well-known skills. They can be used at every stage of the lesson. They are easy to use and provide teacher convenience" ST5 stated "The advantages or the facilities of using digital tools are more for us as EFL teachers, because in English lessons, we need to improve some skills in our students and we need audio and visual materials for this, moreover, the digital tools can provide all of these for us. Accordingly, we are not native speakers, but we can offer native speakers to our students, for instance, the person who students listen to and watch on EBA is a native speaker". ST6 revealed "I think it is beneficial in terms of offering multiplicity, appealing to many sensory organs, and providing cooperative learning, which makes it easier for students to learn. As a necessity of the digital age, these skills of all students should be developed, also, a comprehensive training should be provided and its applicability should be checked". ST8 mentioned "I think, it provides permanence, develops their skills more easily, and increases motivation". ST9 stated "I can also say the following as the advantages

of digital tools. For our students to use these digital tools, we need to develop their skills to adapt to the 21st century, and students should use technology effectively and efficiently. For students who can achieve this, they will progress better in classes all their lives. For this reason, when we think about English lessons, I can say from my students are more interested in the lessons by using digital tools, and the negative attitudes and negative behaviors of the students may also demolish the prejudices against English lessons. But overall I can recognize that they look more positively”.

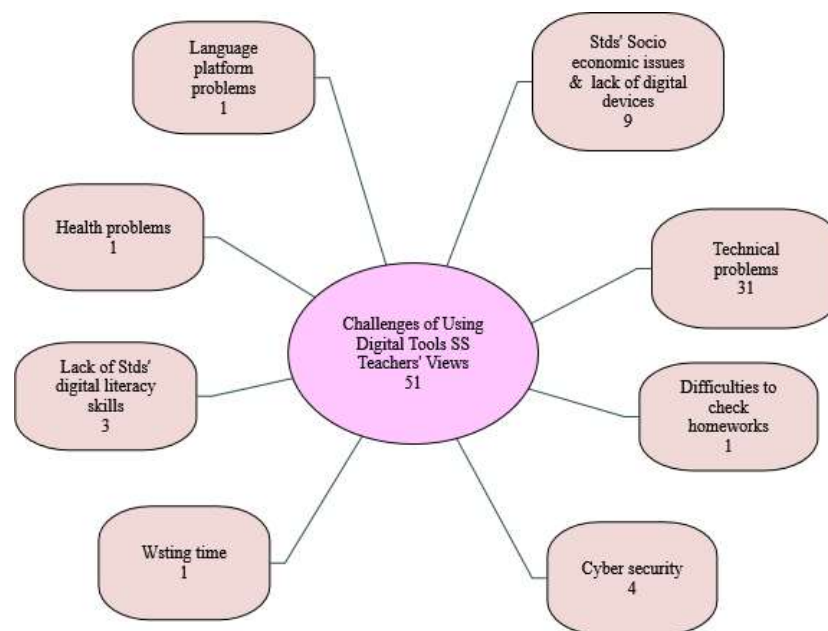


**Figure13.** Facilities of using digital tools HS teachers' views

23 comments were highlighted by the teachers for the facilities of such tools, also five main codes without any categories were created in accordance with their answers. Most of the teachers assisted that the use of digital tools 'made lessons fun, enjoyable, and save time' (f=7), 'providing effective & interactive educational environment' (f=5), and 'making the lesson permanent' (f=3), which they claimed that these are very crucial in the teaching and learning process agreeing to the teachers' answers. HT1 noted, "In my opinion, digital tools are very beneficial for some reasons, for example, they are more practical in terms of providing a more effective and interactive educational environment. Another benefit of the digital tools is that they can make the lesson fun, and being able to do more activities in a short time, thus save time and keep students active in the lessons". HT2 stated, "Language teaching and learning have a dynamic structure that requires different skills, and as English teachers, we can make language learning both fun and permanent by 67 using tools that appeal to these skills. Our students can actively take part in their language learning and we can teach our lessons more easily, especially in the distance education process". HT3 declared, "I think this is very effective in increasing students' learning language in a fun way and increasing their motivation. Students' interest in digital tools enables us to teach more enjoyably. Another advantage of digital tools is that they are ultimately saving time in the end, for example, when we do an activity via the Kahoot tool instead of asking individual students, it saves time by seeing everyone there. So we will provide feedback with this in the lesson and we do not waste time with feedback". Also, HT4 claimed, "It is possible to provide access to information at any time and to have the opportunity to make information permanent". HT5 revealed, "As an advantage, I have to say that the students nowadays can talk digitally. For example, there is a software called Plotagon, which creates a mutual dialogue in a virtual environment. So, they play a more active role in the lesson. The second is in terms of time management, with the writing activity, I can convey the subject in a very short time. They also grasp, know, and become permanent, because they write something by themselves. I think it is more beneficial in terms of both competence and time management". In terms of 'increasing

students' cognitive capacity' (f=5) and 'increasing motivation' (f=3), some noteworthy comments were focused including HT3 pointed out, "I think this is very effective in increasing students' learning language in a fun way and increasing their motivation". HT5 stated "I think it is more beneficial in terms of both competence and time management. Of course, spending a lot of time with technology is not something we want, but now we have to do that with the need for such tools in our daily life and especially the teaching process. What matters to us is how we can use digital tools positively". HT6 revealed, "The advantages, in my opinion, are students that can express themselves very well in online education, and digital tools increase their interest in the lesson". HT8 declared, "The advantages are more for us, so I can say that it makes the learning process more effective and increase students' cognitive capacity". And the last HT9 claimed, "It enables students with different learning styles to learn better and motivate them to learn via digital tools"

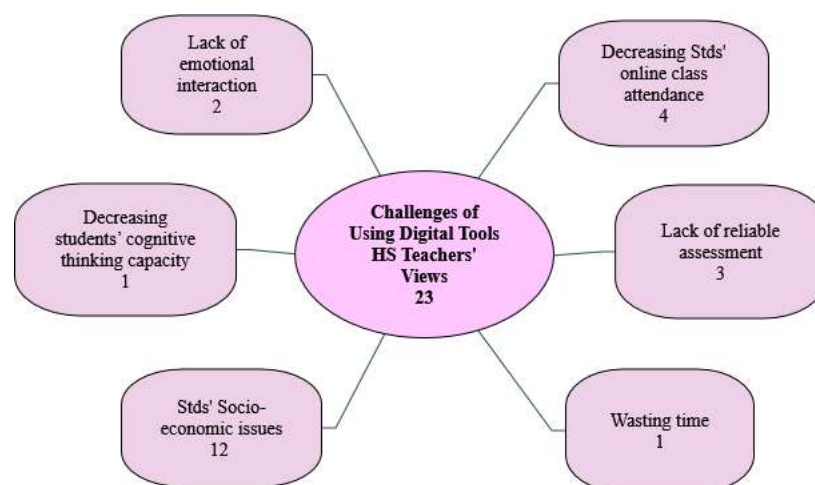
*RQ4. What are the challenges of using digital tools in (secondary & high) school level of EFL teaching?*



**Figure14.** Challenges of using digital tools SS teachers' views

Most of the SS teachers insisted on the reality that they faced many challenges due to technical problems which include power outages, internet access problems, device errors and one of the teachers complained about software issues. Similarly, they complained about students' socio-economic issues that mad difficulties of using digital tools in their instructions. In the matter of 'technical problems' (f=31), and 'students' socio-economic issues' (f=9) all the SS teachers complained about these problems for instance ST1 complained "There may be technical problems, such as sometimes power outages, and internet problems". ST3 stated "The biggest challenge is to work with low socio-economic students. The fact, they do not have their own technological devices and internet access is the biggest obstacle for me or when I want to use more and more diverse digital tools to improve my students' English skills". ST5 declared, "Of course, during the lessons, a technical problem may occur. Sometimes I have to cancel the lesson at that moment because it cannot be solved immediately, and sometimes students disappear". ST7 pointed out, "Students with a low socio-economic level may not have access to the lesson properly. Also, we may have problems with the electricity service because internet access or computer use only

possible with electricity”. ST9 also claimed that “Technical problems, security problems, digital devices are not working more precisely, lack of materials and timeless applications, and waste of time”. Another challenge that was focused on by the teachers, was ‘cybersecurity’ issues which made trouble sometimes as ST4 complained “Since we entered both EBA and school blended education, so we have experienced many challenges in teaching, both physical and technical problems, e.g., loss of internet connection, or if the smartboards are connected to the computer, my flash disk may have a virus, or maybe there is no a compatible program to support the format of the video that I want to play, we have such a problem on the computer. Overall, I can say, cybersecurity problems, lack infrastructure, high fees for applications are the general issues”. ST5 on the other hand noted, “There is also a problem at the point of cybersecurity, which I think is a big challenge in front of using digital tools. For example, in a lesson, foreigners always entered our online lessons. In my opinion, there is no equivalent in it in any way. We had a problem at EBA, I think the biggest challenge of using digital tools is security”. 70 The teachers also highlighted students’ lack of digital literacy skills, which made difficulties in using digital tools in their instruction such as ST1 complained “since our students are not enough digitally literate individual, I can not use digital tools as much as I want. Likewise, when I give homework in live lessons, students have more trouble because they are insufficient in this regard, so it takes a long time to guide students on this issue”. ST6 declared, “The digital literacy levels of my students also affect my education process. We can not conduct collaborative work because we do not have a common area of use”. Based on the observing language problems, one of the teachers said that as the platforms are in the English language not Turkish, it may make trouble for us, ST5 stated, “the platform we use is not in the Turkish language, therefore students do not know how it works very well, i.e., they do not utilize it very well”. Moreover, one of the teachers dedicated that they have ‘difficulties to check home works’ like T8 highlighted, “Since students are not enough in this regard, it can sometimes be difficult to make them use properly. It is more difficult to follow the children after the lessons we do in the online lessons. For example, if something was done in a homework. They can submit their homework one by one at different times, so I think there is a problem to follow”. The last two codes are ‘health problems’ and ‘wasting time’ which were mentioned by two of the teachers; T1 stated “technological devices cause health problems and overexposure to the screen increases my headaches and back pains”. ST9 declared “using the digital tool is a waste of time in my opinion because sometimes it takes a lot of time checking students’ home works or using social media also takes time”



**Figure 15.** Challenges of using tools HS teachers’ views

When HS teachers were asked about the difficulties they face when using digital tools in their classroom, they identified the following issues and concerns. Most of the teachers proclaimed that their students' socio-economic issues made it difficult of using such tools. HT1 declared "The challenges and difficulties I can announce are, the inability to reach all students at the same rate. Because the student's economic issues are different and all of them do not have the same opportunities to access the digital tools, which makes them difficult to attain the lessons. In other words, unfortunately, having general difficulties in accessing these tools due to the socioeconomic level of the students creates a handicap for the frequent use of these tools in the educational process". HT2 stated "Unfortunately, not every student can have a computer, tablet, or smartphone, and even if they do, internet access may not be available. So their access to digital tools can be different and difficult. For these reasons, all of them are not attending the live lessons. This situation can create inequality of opportunity among students. Otherwise, I do not have any difficulties in using digital tools". HT5 pointed out, "The necessity of having internet access and Smartphones. Unfortunately, we sometimes have difficulties with participating all students in the lessons due to the lack of digital tools. So I can realize that socio-economic is a major obstacle that we face in our instruction". HT7 mentioned, "One of the challenges and difficulties of the digital tools that I have faced normally is that I can not reach all the students in the online classes, and another obstacle is that all the students do not have digital devices which make trouble for attending the lessons". Due to the non-existence of the students in classes, teachers claimed that they can not assess students reliably. HT7 stated, "One of the disadvantages I can realize is that in online classes we can not see the students, we do not know what they are doing. Sometimes they mute themselves and close their camera. Therefore, the biggest disadvantage for me is that there is no reliable assessment, we as a teacher do not have a chance to make an assessment". It also leads to decrease students cognitive thinking as the teachers highlighted because students copy and paste assignments they lose their thinking skills, HT9 remarked "Sometimes we can not control the students and we do not know what they are doing behind the camera, which means some of them to close their camera, so we face different kinds of problems in our online instruction. One more disadvantage of digital tools is when we give them an assignment, for example, the students will do their homework, but the question is, did they do the homework themselves? Of course not. They copy and paste from the internet so we can not evaluate them very well. Actually, I do not say the advantages and disadvantages are the same, but I can say if one can use the digital tools correctly it may have many advantages". Wasting time is the last code that was claimed by one of the teachers, HT5 stated, "We spend a lot of time by using digital tools, of course, spending time with technology is not something we want, but now we have to do that with the need of such tools in our daily life and especially the teaching process. What matters to us is how we can use digital tools positively".

## **Discussion and conclusion**

The first interview question sought to identify a meaningful definition of digital literacy. The results indicated that views on the definition of digital literacy are significantly different between HS and SS teachers. According to Dudeney & Hockly (2016), digital literacy means the capacity to understand how to utilize digital technology safely, productively, and wisely, so it indicates that being digitally literate is not just being competent with technical abilities (Dudeney & Hockly, 2016, p. 115). However, based on the findings, most of the SS teachers had a different view of the definition of digital literacy, which are incompatible with Dudeney & Hockly's definition. Most of them focused on accessing and sharing information via technology and being able to use online apps and platforms properly. For them, a digitally literate person knows how to use digital devices and platforms effectively. Although few of them



defined digital literacy as “it is important how we use technologies”, one defined digital literacy as one of the needs of the 21st century, which is well-matched with (Theisen et al., 2011).

Besides the findings of the HS teachers are consistent with the definition by Dudeney & Hockly (2016), i.e., most of them defined digital literacy as accessing, producing, analysing, and most importantly using digital tools effectively and safely. They insisted that being digitally literate “is not just finding information, rather it is significant how do we use such tools and transfer information to students safely”. The results show that the HS teachers had more information about digital literacy, while some of the SS teachers still lack enough information about digital literacy Akayoğlu, Satar, Dikilitaş, Cirit ve Korkmazgil (2020) obtained the similar results in defining digital literacy. They found that their pre-service teacher participants focused on technical skills and have the ability to read and write online. Whereas some of their participants explained a broader view of digital literacy than just learning to read and write on the internet.

There were only two options for the respondents, including feeling “competent enough” or “not competent enough”. What is more notable is that the findings varied between the SS and the HS teacher samples of the study, which few of SS teachers reported as being ‘not competent enough’ while the majority of the teachers chose ‘competent enough’. On the other hand, the findings for the HS teachers were different. Few of the HS teachers felt ‘competent enough’, yet the majority of teachers insisted that they ‘do not feel competent enough’. There are several possible factors for the HS teachers’ findings, which can be addressed according to the explanations they mentioned. One of the possible satisfactory explanations of the HS teachers was that they did not feel competent enough due to the ever-changing technologies which required more and more practice. Another possible reason was that they insisted on constantly learning and developing their digital skills so that they did not feel competent enough. Regardless of a variety of studies indicating how teachers’ digital literacy can improve the learning and teaching process, there is worldwide evidence of EFL teachers with limited levels of digital literacies (Cote & Milliner, 2018). Dashtestani (2014) confirmed that Iranian educators lacked enough digital literacy, and CALL incorporation for their EFL instruction. Son and his colleagues conducted a survey with Indonesian English teachers and they found that their EFL teacher participants lacked several essential digital competencies (Son et al., 2011). Half of both SS and HS teachers claimed that they are familiar with how to use digital resources. Other teachers believed that they were able to utilize digital tools purposefully to interact with their students or language teaching settings. Remarkably, half of both SS and HS teachers demonstrated that their digital literacy skills were not competent enough due to the ever-changing of novel technologies. They insisted on the need for self-development of digital technologies, which is well-matched with findings of (Bezemer & Kress, 2015). Commonly, most of the HS and SS teachers maintained that before the training and seminars about digital technologies that were conducted by the Ministry of Education, they were not competent enough, but the training enabled them to use digital technologies more sufficiently and to be able to use current technological resources in their language instruction. Quintana & Zambrano (2014) supported the results of the current study; they claimed that recent training by the ministry of education had a positive impact on the teachers’ teaching environment.

Digital literacy is important in assisting teachers in becoming lifelong learners. It provides them with both academic and beneficial life skills and also it affects students’ outcomes (Cole, 2019, May 23). So, in line with it, one of the interview questions was to reveal the effects of SS and HS teachers’ levels of digital literacy on their instruction. Based on the findings of both of the SS and HS teachers, the majority of teachers insisted that their digital literacy level had a positive impact on their teaching EFL classes.

As the EFL teachers, both SS and HS teachers had many similar points of view, and according to the findings of this interview question few different perspectives were recorded. Considering the positive impacts of teachers' digital literacy levels, some of the SS and HS teachers depicted that their digital literacy levels facilitate language learning. They claimed that they can search well and find good resources for whatever they need in their personal life and academic life as well. The positive impact of the digital literacy level of the SS and the HS teachers was to make the language lessons efficient and attractive, as well as save time. Some of the respondents referred to reliable resources that made the lesson more engaging and entertaining through such interesting tools, moreover, they made the learning permanent. The teacher samples of the study also claimed that with the help of their digital literacy level, they can access information easily and quickly. Back to the literature, there is evidence that supports these findings, if technology implements perfectly by the digitally literate teachers, it can affect teaching EFL positively. It can provide significant opportunities to the EFL stakeholders both teachers and students (Dashtestani, 2016; Turan & Akdag-Cimen, 2020). Thus, it indicates that enhancing a sufficient level of digital literacy tends to be a necessary condition for applying effective technology resources into EFL contexts (Lotherington & Jenson, 2011). Another crucial positive impact of the digital literacy level of the teachers on their instruction was that it led to improve their students' language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and attracting their focus on the English language lesson (Mudra, 2020). In addition to the positive impacts of both SS and HS teacher samples of the study, identified that using interactive learning tools made their instruction more enjoyable, and it made the outcomes more productive and efficient. Some of the SS teachers highlighted that a teacher with a good digital literacy level and by using digital tools can address students effectively more than in the way of classical teaching. The last comment for the positive impact of the digital literacy level of the teachers on their instruction was saving time. The teachers in both SS and HS teachers concluded that their good level of digital literacy and access to information would save their time.

The present study sought to determine how digital tools facilitate the EFL level of teaching in both SS and HS teachers. The findings of the current study confirm the previous studies that examined the benefits and the facilities of the digital tools for the in-service teachers worldwide, e.g., (Alshumaimeri, 2008; Chung, 2014; Jebiril, 2012; Kim et al., 2013; Mollaei & Riasati, 2013; Nim Park & Son, 2009), similarly, in Turkish in-service contexts, such as (Çelik & Aytin, 2014; Sağlam & Sert, 2012; Uluuysal et al., 2014).

The research identified the challenges that the teachers faced. Many challenges and difficulties were mentioned by both SS and HS teachers. EFL teachers are often faced with a number of limitations in their classroom settings, such as lack of institutional support, a restrictive school curriculum, imperfect resources and technical problems. The result of this research question is compatible with Zheng & Borg (2014). What is more remarkable is that the challenges are varied according to the SS and the HS teachers of the study. It was noteworthy that both groups of teachers reported similar socioeconomic issues for students.

All in all, digital literacy has now become a vital aspect in the world and especially in the education process. So, with the rapid advancement of novel technologies, SS and HS EFL teachers should not only recognize the importance of using current digital tools but also to be able to properly assess those resources and tools for secure and effective implementations. Using a full qualitative research design the current study has recommended that the future researchers may use surveys and scales to reach big figures and compare the results.

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