

## The Use of Digital Literature as a Teaching Tool

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**Abstract:**

Digital literature is a new medium for literature that is created digitally and is meant to be read on electronic devices. In this day and age, technology has become an integral part of our lives, and education is no exception. Online learning is not solely a crisis management tool like in the case of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, but it is rather a useful tool in education that should be implemented into existing curricula, especially in ESP. Technology is already an addiction for youth, so digital literature can be a powerful educational tool that ESP teachers can use.

**Keywords:** Digital Literature; education; ESP; tools; technology

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The success of designing a good syllabus in any language teaching depends on constant developments that embrace the changing circumstances. The teacher should be able to adapt to new situations, especially in ESP since it depends on the needs of the learner. Being creative with the syllabus' content is what keeps the teaching interesting. Digital literature is a great teaching tool because it is an innovative way of learning. Since it is a change from the traditional tools, it is considered entertaining and enjoyable, and the teacher will find it easy to grab the attention and interest of the learners.

Digital literature is relatively new in ESP. Due to the current social distancing policies, new ideas in virtualizing lessons are very much needed. This paper aims to explore the different uses of Digital literature in language teaching, and more specifically in ESP. We will also explore the different digital literature, and their merits if used in ESP.

## 2. The Rising Influence of Digital Literature

Literature is a form of art that usually is thought of as tangible written works printed and published as books. Due to the advancements in technologies, many digital expressions are considered literature. Digital literature is one of the newest forms of literary expression and a side effect of the digital age we are living in. It refers to all the literature exclusively created in digital form and uploaded on the internet. Printed literary works that have been digitalized into e. books are not included in the term's definition.

Digital literature can be a vague concept, but what constitutes one is that it is originally written on a device and posted online. It is a form of art, and like any other art, it is "a continuation of that which has come before" (O'Sullivan, 2019, p.2). Just like literature, it provides a story to tell with contexts, themes, and characters. However, it is a modern and digitalized way to read literary texts. It can be a short story in tweets on Twitter, a video of a poem on YouTube, or a novel published first online on Kindle to mention a few of its forms. Moreover, video games with a story to tell are also considered digital literature. In short, it is a form of storytelling written and posted on electronic devices.

Because of its loose definition, and its inclusivity to many online modes of expression, digital literature's influence is everywhere in social media. However, we are not well aware of its existence because of the public's lack of knowledge of the term.

We understand what social networks are, and we understand what is a tweet, a video, and a video game; however, we have never associated them with literature. Young people spend a lot of time on their electronic devices, and they stumble on many digital literary texts without recognizing them. Making teachers familiar with the different digital literature available online and free of charge enables them to utilize it. Teachers can make use of the youth's addiction to technology in favor of developing teaching techniques.

### **3. Using Digital Literature as a Tool in ESP**

Teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a learner-centered approach. It generates different syllabi to fit the different needs of learners from different fields. As opposed to teaching general English, which aims at teaching the whole language to be used in everyday conversational situations, ESP's purpose is developing the communicative skill in the specific discipline of the learner. Moreover, all fields use technology for their good, and digital literature is a great way to employ technology in English teaching, and more specifically in ESP.

No methodology or source of teaching materials fits all language learning situations, and there are no specific methodologies made for ESP. Its strict adherence to the principle of catering to learner's needs makes it flexible.

ESP is not different in kind from any other form of language teaching, in that it should be based in the first instance on principles of effective and efficient learning. Though the content of learning may vary there is no reason to suppose that the process of learning should be any different for the ESP learner than for the General English learner. There is, in other words, no such thing as an ESP methodology, merely methodologies that have been applied in ESP classrooms but could just as well have been used in the learning of any kind of English. (Cited. in. Hirvela, 1990, p.240)

Because of its flexibility, the teacher is free to be as creative with the tools of teaching as he pleases as long as he achieves his purpose. Digital literature can be a teaching material because 'any type of discourse is eligible for consideration as a teaching aid provided it contributes to the goal of teaching at hand.' (Hivela p.240). EFL learners have long regarded reading and understanding literature without any problems as an end-goal; however, using it as teaching material is found to be very

useful and practical, especially for ESP learners. The following are the trendiest digital platforms with interesting content that is considered digital literature.

### **3.1. Interactive Fiction: Video Games**

Video games with a story to tell are part of digital literature. The player is also a reader that reads, understands, and interacts with the storyline. The games offer a virtual reality with stimulation of real-life situations. The teacher uses games to make contexts and help the learner to immerse himself and make himself familiar with vocabulary, language, and discourses of a specific field.

### **3.2. Tweets as Literature: Twitterature**

Twitterature is a hybrid word formed from the two words Twitter and literature. The latter is artistic texts that tell a story, and users of Twitter made the platform as a medium to share their literary creations. Twitter is not a serious and a literary platform per se; however, one can post well-constructed tweets with good grammar, no spelling mistakes, and tell a story or an insight. Twitter limits the length of tweets to two hundred and eighty characters, and that is enough to deliver a short message. The constraint with the words count pushes the author to be creative and witty. Tweets are not limited to the traditional novel or poem forms but can be a creative short text that delivers an insightful social expression. Because of the constraint of the number of characters in a tweet, authors chose to have their novels on a number of consecutive tweets. Some examples would be Jennifer Egan's *Black Box*, which was first published in about 500 tweets in 2012; and David Mitchell's *The Right Sort*, first published as almost 300 tweets sent over one week in 2014.

### **3.3. Memes as Literature**

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a meme is "an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online, especially through social media." As opposed to novels, short stories, and poems that are more formal and have certain traditional forms, memes are captions that aim to present social instances and deliver a message humorously and directly. Memes bring in the culture factor into account and enhance the learner's creative and critical thinking. A great exercise idea for a classroom is presenting the same picture or some memeable pictures, and the teacher would ask them to write appropriate captions. This can be a warm-up exercise at the beginning of a class or a short homework.

## **4. The Advantages of using Digital Literature as a Teaching Tool**

Digital literature is the new trend in EFL classrooms. It helps to keep up with

the times we live in as the digital age has taken over everything. Like any other tool, digital literature presents many advantages.

The new and rising generations are digital natives, and the majority are more reliant on visual learning. Digital literature caters better to young people and presents a great solution for visual learners. It is a great tool in ESP since it is about delivering lessons and teaching English efficiently.

Digital literature provides good contexts to train and improve soft skills, also known as common or core skills. They are considered personal and professional skills. I.e. they are life and career competencies. Soft skills include creative and critical thinking, learning to learn, communication, and collaboration skills. They are important to any career. The teacher has to focus on the specific field of the learner and try to search and deliver digital material with the content that serves the learner's needs.

Using digital literature as a teaching tool can be innovative and more fun; it provides different contexts and different forms of storytelling that can spike interest and motivate the learners. By making the lessons entertaining, learners will not feel the pressure of learning, and they will have fun as they learn. Digital literature presents the fun of enjoying a digital piece without consciously knowing that they are learning and in a classroom. It presents a change from the traditional, old school lessons.

Electronic literature enables interaction from the reader. The latter no longer has a passive role that cannot interact with the material; he is an active participant. It is inclusive to the writer where he can perceive information and interact with it. "Electronic literature presents narrative freedom, but within author-defined structural constraints." (O'Sullivan, 2019, p.67). The author has control over the story, and over the amount of interaction perceived. The way the reader interacts affects the literary work, and in a way, he becomes part of the making of meaning in the literary text.

Moreover, engaging digital literature as teaching material in ESP can enhance the digital literacy for the learners. They do not only learn the language specific in their field, but also they learn how to engage in the virtual world. We live in a digital world where everything is digitalized; therefore, digital literacy is an important skill.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Digital literature is a new genre in literature. The term is exclusive to all digital and literary expressions that were created, posted, and read on a device. It often takes on non-traditional forms as opposed to printed literary texts. It can be tweets, videos, video games, and memes to mention a few.

There is no one specific methodology in ESP. The latter is a learner-centered approach, and as long as the needs of the learners are met, the teacher is free to be as creative as they can. Digital Literature is an innovative and creative tool in teaching English.

Electronic literature does not only develop communicative competencies but also develops the soft skills that a learner needs in both his personal life and in his career. It trains critical and creative thinking, learning to learn, communication and collaboration skills. The engaging nature of the digital texts makes the reader an active participant that is constantly using his skills to perceive and understand it. Furthermore, along with these basic skills, the learner also develops his digital literacy.

The learner gets to be involved and interactive with the literary material. The respective roles of an author and a reader still exist; however, the latter is more engaged and interactive with the text. This constant involvement not only develops the learner's soft skills but also makes the process of learning more enjoyable.

Digital texts can disguise learning with fun and interactive texts. The teaching materials can be video games, memes, or tweets to mention a few. The humorous nature and the non-traditional forms of the material entertain and motivate the learners. The learning experience is less rigid and more conforming to the needs of the learners, as long as the teacher searches and presents content that serves the needs of the learners.

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