
‘What do I need to Know?’: A Narrative Inquiry of Experiences and Expectations for Addressing the Needs of English language learners (ELLs)

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Abstract

Teaching English language learners is the initial phase of language education programs for English language teachers when they are introduced to a child’s world, developmental traits, needs, and interests as well as teaching and learning approaches for their learners. This study, which employs the qualitative approach of narrative inquiry, shares personal accounts of the researcher’s experiences and expectations in an attempt to expand knowledge about the most effective ways to teach English to young students. The results imply that English teachers should motivate ELLs to acquire the language, offer interactive language worksheets as in-class activities, and see mistakes as learning opportunities. The findings also revealed how important it is to include technology into learning environments and give ELLs opportunities to practice their language skills. The findings of the study have implication for both present and future research, but primarily for English practice and education.

Keywords: English Language Learners, English Language, Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Learning English, especially as a second language, has proven to be difficult, particularly for non-native speakers. The key to learning and developing skills in English is to equip English Language Learners (ELLs) with basic skills such as counting, reading and writing. Many parents, students, and teachers place importance on having good skill sets in English. Effective English education programs are developed in schools in order to attain the intended learning objectives. A plethora of studies on English language teaching to ELLs has been done, incorporating various kinds of teaching and learning approaches. English language teachers must possess certain competencies, including language competency, topic knowledge, contextual knowledge, language teacher identity, learner-focused instruction, pedagogical reasoning abilities, and the ability to theorize from experience (Richard, 2011). They are aware of all these competencies, however, there is always a gap in teachers’ knowledge and beliefs about English teaching (Kim, 2019). A lot of current or aspiring teachers still experience the paucity of knowledge necessary to properly instruct ELLs in English. Güngör (2016) claimed that there should be an awareness that ELLs should be exposed to an accurate, fluent, and clear language that they can acquire.

In the essence of narrative inquiry, the researcher took the chance to conduct language teaching research into the development of ELLs. Rather than simply reflecting on what she has learned, she has the opportunity to choose which teaching experiences she wants to employ in order to highlight the best instructional practices from my learning-to-teaching experiences (i.e., personal teaching journal, written narratives, recorded mentor-mentee teaching sessions, etc.). Effective teaching and a good method are imperative to build a conducive learning process because teacher holds important role to create an opportunity for students to become active, autonomous participants in their own English development in order for them to stay engaged in their learning (Azatova, 2021). This study is deemed to help novice teachers to understand how language unfolds.

English Language Teaching (ELT)

Research has claimed that teachers of different first languages are typically well-versed in beneficial approaches and strategies that they can impart while maintaining a positive attitude. By serving as knowledgeable mediators and anticipating and bridging challenges, they can foster the perfect environment for advancing the language acquisition process (Llurda, 2014). Language teachers are taught to use declarative and pro-

cedural knowledge while reflecting on their activities and applying the skills they learn in daily life (Wei, 2021). They need to collect information on their own teaching, examine their attitudes, assumptions, and teaching strategies, and then use the information as the basis for a comprehensive strategy. Knowing teachers' experiences and expectations is crucial for improving the teaching and learning process (Golombek & Johnson, 2021), giving them the opportunity to share what they have learned and experienced is the best approach to finding out the best practice in teaching English. The methodological content of teaching and learning via experiences must therefore be more understood by novice English language teachers as well as by themselves as potential teachers. They should be aware that as new teaching techniques appear, pedagogical adjustments may be required to promote multi-modal language mastery (Tan et al., 2019). Learning a second language, as well as skills for professions and educational prospects, are all lifetime learning pursuits.

Adult English language learners (ELLs) are ought to study English while also preparing for the demands of modern life, particularly college and the workplace, which is a difficult undertaking for both learners and teachers (Huang, 2022). What teachers believe and feel about teaching a language can have an impact on the way they develop their teaching competences because teaching itself involves thoughts and behaviors (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999). Novice English teachers frequently assess and consider their competency throughout the process by contrasting themselves to colleagues or other instructors in the field. They base their assessment of their own English teaching abilities on their knowledge and beliefs about learning and teaching the language that they have gleaned from a variety of informational sources (Steyn & Mynhardt, 2008). Their self-evaluation may cause them to feel confident or frustrated about their instruction, which may have a beneficial or negative impact on their motivation and sense of self as English teachers in the future. These studies were mostly aimed at enhancing competence. This justifies an effort to look for high-quality data regarding how to address the demands of English language learners. The research empirically answers the following questions: What distinct experience do English language teachers should know that help them in the English language proficiency development of their ELLs?; What outcomes do English teachers anticipate ELLs will achieve throughout their language teaching?

Theoretical Bases

This research aims to add to the literature by sharing various experiences with teaching English to English Language Learners (ELLs). By assessing their own performance and identifying the abilities they acquired via their educational activities, teachers can create bridges between their existing knowledge and new knowledge (Bergsmann et al., 2015). Teachers need to be as conscious of their own competencies as they are of any potential student competencies. The study is based on Crawshaw's (2015) theory of language learning, which discusses how teachers might support their students' use of a combination of intuitive and conscious processes to process information about the language they are learning (Journal & Teaching, 1989). Additionally, it would be logical from a research standpoint to combine the Krashen theory of communicative language teaching with the natural approach. This theory seeks to understand how teachers perceive students' potential for developing their capacity and ability to comprehend the material (Koonthar et al., 2018). By encouraging learning and fostering success in a global environment, the use of best practices in the classroom has a positive impact on students (Arif et al., 2016). These two theories of Crawshaw and Krashen enabled the researchers in shaping, elucidating, foreseeing, and comprehending the research issues inside the predetermined parameters that would in some way support this investigation.

METHODS

A narrative inquiry was conducted to answer the research question. Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research in which the stories themselves become the raw data. This method has been applied in various academic fields to discover more about the narrator's identity, way of life, cultural background, and historical experiences. The narrative approach incorporates either inquiry that generates data in narrative form or inquiry that is oriented at narratives of human experience. Interviews that ask questions about stories or oral histories, as well as written autobiographies and biographies, are examples of inquiries that produce narrative data (Butina, 2015). It is frequently employed in sociological and academic research (Haydon & van der Riet, 2017). This study includes reflective commentary on the researcher's experience that portray beliefs associated with the experiences.

Methodological Positioning

It is human to make meaning of experiences by telling stories, and humans live in a constant narrative. The stories told are frequently based on past experiences, yet as these stories progress. Through this investigation, the researcher hopes to gain fresh perspectives. In other words, this study's methodological stance is empiricist or positivist because it would investigate human perspectives and experiences based on firsthand observation (Perera & Sutrisna, 2010).

Procedure and Sample

The use of narrative inquiry is relevant to the current study because providing insights into English language instruction might encourage shared learning among novice teachers, researchers, and students about what and how to teach English to young learners, potentially leading to creative approaches.

Participants and recruitment

Purposive sampling was used for this study's sampling strategy because it ensures a variety of viewpoints and focuses on specific traits that help the researchers find the answers to the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling was used by the researchers to identify experienced English education teachers. Participants will be recognized based on their prior teaching experience. Indonesian participants have been engaged in teaching. The individuals were roughly 40 years old. The participants were asked if they had read the provided information sheet before being asked to verbally assent. To guarantee confidentiality, each participant received a set of coded initials. With the use of teaching-affirming communication, the research sought to foster a sense of trust and respect among the study participants.

Data Collection

As a strategy for data collection and data construction, the narrative inquiry was used in this study. The current study chose interviews, observation, and analysis on the artifact, written narratives or field notes, and ELLs' work as its data gathering methods. In narrative inquiry, the interviewee is the storyteller. The participants of the study hold the power of knowledge because they are the experts on their lived experience. The observation was conducted during the learners' learning process. It is imperative to observe and archive the result of the learning activities. The written narratives utilized in this study were teachers' field notes or personal teaching journals.

Each participant who accepted to take part in the study was set up for a one-on-one conversation at a time and location that they both agreed upon. Informed consent was collected from each participant at the initial engagement. Data were gathered through interviews, field notes, and participants' data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis within the narrative inquiry method uses approaches that are typical of qualitative research including ongoing analysis, coding, and theme identification. According to Clandinin (2013), both researchers and participants are regarded as co-composers of narrative accounts in narrative inquiry, which is why the researcher's embodied responses were included. Clandinin (2013) emphasized that what matters are the participants' and researchers' developing lives. The researcher noticed each dimension in the framework Connelly and Clandinin presented when she studied the data (2006). In order to pay attention to timeliness, she started each report by considering the participant's earlier experiences teaching English. The narrative of each participant's expectations for teaching English was also collected so that they could keep track of any changes in experience. Writing field notes was used to address the participant's emotions, hopes, desires, and reactions in the second dimension, the social and personal dimensions. The researcher engaged in a multi-step process engaging in multiple rounds of coding using various lenses and then graduating toward larger patterns and themes, implementing the six phases of Braun, Virginia Clarke, (2006) thematic analysis: 1) familiarizing with the data, 2) generating codes, 3) constructing themes, 4) reviewing potential themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report.

Story Reference

For story reference, the study incorporated three dimensional space: the who, where, when in order to focus on the content of the story. The narrator of the story is language teachers who has been working as an English teacher for almost 18 years. The researcher purposefully selected the participants based on their teaching experience with young learners. The level of context of the story is the personal experience of the narrator, relating experience as a teacher to future expectations.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to the start of the interviews and ob-

servation, the researcher ought to obtain the participants' permission. A form was handed to the participants to complete. The goal of the study was clarified clearly on the form. All data that is retrieved were handled with confidentiality. Lastly, participants were given explicit permission for their teaching data to be used, before they entered any personal data.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on teacher's experiences and expectations in teaching young learners. The findings of this study are provided under two research questions, and from each of the questions, the themes are segmented through careful analysis.

Distinct Experience

Investigating English teachers' experiences working with young students is the study question for this particular issue. Participants described that they identified distinct experience in teaching English to ELLs; wherein, this experiences helped them faced teaching issues. The researcher composed participants' experiences into three emerging themes:

Ignite Willingness

Language teachers are often feel obliged to teach the language without considering the willingness of the learners. Everyone has different learning backgrounds in viewing English language. There are those who like the language and those who do not like it because of certain factors. But one of the most important things to know, everyone's willingness to learn can be ignited by ensuring that he or she will benefit from what they learn. Lee and Drajeti (2019) concurred with what Macintyre and Charos (1996) such as attitudes, motivation, perceived competence, and anxiety, in predicting success in second language learning and communication. Path analysis was used to investigate the relations among these variables, to examine their impact on the frequency of second language communication, and to examine the role of global personality traits. Significant paths affecting the frequency of communication were found, from willingness to communicate in the second language (L2) proposed that willingness to communicate in a second language refers to a willingness to engage into the discourse at a specific time with a specific person or persons, using a Second language. It boils down to having the willingness to learn and be involved in the learning process. Participants sha-

red their experience about igniting willingness as stated in the following excerpts:

Whenever I teach my students, I always ask them 'Are you willing to learn?' It's important to know their willingness. It functions as their drive to continue studying even though they encounter struggles throughout their learning process. I remember a simple talk I had with my student. I asked him where his notebook was and he responded that he forgot. I questioned her for being unprepared. So I came up with a simple question, 'Do you like to learn English?' he just shrugged. I somehow realized that he was not into English and I needed to convince him that English is fun and intriguing to learn. I then told him how passionate I am toward English. At last I asked him what was his favorite subject at school. He said he loved P.E. because he could move a lot. With a quick response, I told him that English is as fun as P.E.; he can also move around by learning English. I notice some changes in his expression and I didn't want to ruin that moment so I said to him to discover the fun together and he agreed. As a teacher, I perceive that having a desire to learn is imperative.

The reason why people learn a language is something that many English speakers might not understand. They can view it as a requirement or a subject that must be learned. They need to be encouraged to open their hearts and put forth all of their efforts to develop a willingness for perfecting the abilities.

To my understanding, the concept of teaching that I remember is that teacher holds a role as friend not a judge. I want my students to feel relaxed in learning English, no judgmental revision or correction. I need to create fun learning activities through games, short play, etc. I make sure that I provide authentic materials to my students to help them immerse into the language. This is sort of a subtle persuasion; wherein, they will have the desire to explore the language. Liking the subject or having the enjoyment in learning English will smooth the process of learning. In addition, as an English teacher, I must be aware of my skills, pronunciation, grammar, the intonation and clarity. Most importantly, English teacher need to make sure that the students understand the lesson given. What topics need to be reviewed. How to help those who are still very low, giving them free one on one session or making a small *Whatsapp* group then discuss about certain topics (ST 2).

Abdullah et al. (2019) wrote in their research that their participants said they would be interested in learning the language if they know

about English culture and the language real context. People have always lived in a world of communication; therefore, English Language Learners have to be guided to identify the purposes of learning English and its different uses to shape a culture.

Hands-on Language Worksheet

Participants highlighted that classroom activities must be envisioned to meet the needs of the English language learners (ELL). The participants acknowledge the importance of hands-on language worksheets to promote active learning, giving them student-centered setting. Using in-class worksheet was the alternative that seemed to have the best chance of fulfilling these requirements. Worksheets can be adjusted to achieve particular objectives and are incredibly flexible (Leslie-Pelecky, 2000).

Language is arbitrary as it has been there as always even from the very beginning of human history. Knowledge is so wide and unlimited. However, it will always experience the changes as much as the cultures. Language is the matter of copying with understanding. Give you the example, I provide worksheet for my students, well mostly essays. Worksheet is important to measure how far they have understood or mastered, how much knowledge has been recorded in their mind/understanding related to their skills in writing (including grammar and composition), even if it's simple requirement [ST 2]

The major focus while creating worksheets is that they adhere to the needs of the students. Students are more motivated to work on or with a piece of information if they believe it is relevant to their needs. Worksheets encourage motivation in addition to meaningful learning as opposed to rote learning (KASAP, 2016). In most cases, worksheets were used to establish the knowledge and understanding needed for the material that followed. (Leslie-Pelecky, 2000). The plethora of print-rich materials utilized in a variety of ways to enhance learners' introduction to literacy and numeracy is a frequent feature of well-resourced early childhood classrooms. Walls, cupboards, doors, and, in general, any open surface are typically covered in alphabet letters, image charts, number cards, and life skills-related graphical material that teachers ostensibly use as learning support material (Evans & Cleghorn, 2022).

Throughout my teaching career, I've always given my students in-class worksheets to help them accomplish specific goals. Naturally, it is exhausting to prepare them for every meeting, but I find it somewhat helpful to provide my

students worksheets to facilitate active learning. They have comprehensive understanding on the topic I teach. Anyway, they get to see the big picture of the concept through the activity included in the worksheets. I provide the worksheet after learning a particular topic, not only it is important but it eases my work to assess their needs [ST 1].

Providing rich learning materials shows an indication of learners' cognitive engagement where they will be able to evaluate and monitor their learning process. They have the ability to familiarize themselves with the learning objectives and expose themselves to a wide-range of vocabulary (Handley et al., 2011).

Previously, I didn't want to bother myself by preparing extra materials for my students. I followed the textbook and do the task provided in the textbook. I began to realize that the class is less attractive. Students' cognitive development is not challenged. Textbook doesn't really serve the detailed needs of the students. It is much easier to reach the objectives through worksheets. [ST 2]

Allowing learners to explore their learning ability through worksheet gives strong cognitive engagement. Worksheets helps students learn in a variety of ways, in addition to aiding long-term learning. By organizing activities related to the cognitive engagement approach, students can be closely observed, their personal perspectives can be easily determined, and effective communication with them should be developed (Nur at, 2016). Students become motivated to take active roles in the learning process.

Errors to Stimulate Learning

English Language Learners (ELL) most likely have fear of being evaluated. The people who make learners feel uneasy or make them hesitant to continue studying are known as grammar police, grammar freaks, grammar Nazi, or whatever other names people give them. Many language teachers may carry the concept that 'making mistakes and receiving criticism in English skills are critical steps in the language acquisition process' (Nguyen et al., 2021 p.46-57). Shifting the learner's standpoint to regard errors as an instrument for skill improvement is challenging. It is difficult to progress to the next phase if he is being corrected at every step of his way. Nevertheless, ELLs can be slowly guided to view errors as learning stimulation.

I was so hesitant to speak or utilize the language when I was younger. When I make mistakes, I have a tendency to estimate how harshly people will judge me. However, on several instan-

ces, friends have critiqued my use of language or my grammatical errors while we were speaking. After getting active in the language teaching field, I discovered that English language learners should consider mistakes as their milestones, shifting the idea that errors will promote accelerate learning. Take a look at my student's work [*showing student's work*]. He has slight grammar mishaps in his writing yet I do not immediately point out on his mistakes. I want him to keep exploring his ability. If you see in this worksheet, he doodled his errors which means his grammar tuition is working (ST 1).

Errors can be employed as tools to stimulate learners while also assisting them in building conceptual knowledge by learning from their errors (Gardee & Brodie, 2015). ELLs will enjoy the learning process if they are made to feel at ease while learning. As they embrace errors for learning stimulation, active learning will take place (Barney & Maughan, 2015).

Create the feeling of safe and secure. It's almost impossible for me to avoid mistakes in the learning process of a new or other language. I think it's fine when error happens as long as correction is made. I should make my students feel the same; they must not feel shy to try, or afraid to try. This maxim is indeed true that practice makes perfect. Then I need to assure creating comfortable atmosphere in every positive way. There is no punishment but only reward. This has high potential in building up students' self-confidence (ST 2).

Usually when addressing faults and blunders, teachers typically run into two issues. They must would determine what caused the error or mistake. Then, they will be able to come up with strategies for interacting with students and pointing out errors in a productive way. In that case, they will develop techniques to make sure that their students do not make the same mistakes (Valero et al., 2008). Students' strengths and shortcomings are identified through assessment, which is a crucial component of the language learning process. This information helps teachers determine what to teach next and what needs to be revised (Mohammadi & Golaghaei, 2018).

Expectations about ELLs' Outcomes

Based on the data obtained from the discussion, the researcher found that each participant described the possible expectations in teaching ELLs to promote academic growth. Following that, the researcher organized the participants' experiences into two emerging themes:

Implementation of Technology in Teaching

The participants acknowledge that their primary role in teaching is to promote ELLs' language success. Educators were compelled to begin teaching remotely in a short period of time, despite the backing of most educational institutions, their digital learning environments, and their staff, as people are aware due to Covid-19. They would benefit from the usage of technology because they would be more aware of the possibilities. It is believed that most students are proficient enough to participate in digital lessons (Hadar et al., 2020). Teachers that actively use technology develop students with improved levels of critical thinking and communication abilities (Kormos, 2022).

Teachers are now expected to be technologically literate. It's true. Every learning activity must lead to effective technology use. Personally, I believe that using technology to teach languages has a lot of potential. There are various programs that really assist both myself and my students in comprehending the lesson. Furthermore, my students become more interested in class activities that involve technology. I shared with you a while ago about the importance of having worksheet. I have two forms of worksheet, paper-based and digital worksheets. Students are more interested in using digital worksheets but the downside is not everyone has the tools to access the digital worksheets [ST1]

Information and communication technology (ICT) has been widely used by higher education institutions (HEIs) as a crucial element for improving instructional procedures (teaching and learning) (Fahadi & Khan, 2022). Language teachers use technology for a variety of reasons, with many reporting that their use is intended to suit their own professional as well as their students' needs (Kormos, 2022).

If I am technology literate, students will see my professionalism, that I am an advanced and innovative person. This is the same as building students' trust in me. Teaching with technology gives fun ambiance. It allows for teachers to establish a student-centered learning. For instance, in teaching listening, I use podcast. For speaking class, I introduce video-making to my students. My students enjoy activity that involves technology. There are plenty of in-class activities that we can apply through technology [ST2].

Teachers are the key agents for successful learning. Today's ELLs have more access to information and more tools available to them to manage their own learning than ever before (Suryanto dan Rosad (2015, 2020).

Creativity to Experience

Participants emphasized that unleashing learners' creativity is not a cliché. Though challenging, the move from creativity to experience is attainable. There is a greater requirement for teachers to be aware of students' basic needs (Simanjuntak & Panjaitan, 2021). Knowing the fundamental needs of the student will help them unfold their creativity.

First of all, of course as an English teacher, I must be aware of my skills or competences, namely the pronunciation, grammar knowledge, and clarity. I need to create a fun learning activities through games, short play, etc. Most importantly, I have to make sure that the students understand the lessons, what topics need to be reviewed and how to help the low learners, for example I give them one-on-one session, create a small group via *WhatsApp* to discuss certain topics. For the students to experience 'from the unknown to the known'. That through my skills and competences, they can develop their ability in sharpening their own skills [ST 2].

To effectively impart knowledge, language teachers must be careful while selecting the most effective teaching strategies and learning tools, in addition to creating lesson plans (ChengChiang Chen, 2019). The curriculum is frequently condensed in Indonesian schools to better meet the objectives of the National Exam, which results in the elimination of attitudes and skills from the educational experience (Romios et al., 2020). Instead of putting all their efforts into getting good grades on the national test or school final, English learners should be offered numerous opportunities that let them experience the language.

The lesson plans I design must provide pathways for my students to explore the language by themselves. Dictating them what to do and what to learn will block their creativity. Simply say, show to them and let them explore. I make sure that I provide my student with lots of experience using the language. I give them a platform to showcase their potential. You know how people take piano lessons, at the end of the curriculum they have to do a recital. I take this concept into my language teaching. Take a look at these videos, and also my students' works (*showing the evidences*) [ST 1]

Creativity requires efforts. Subekti, (2018) stated in his research that it may be beneficial to put more emphasis on the students' learning efforts because they might then be inspired to use English more despite their low abilities.

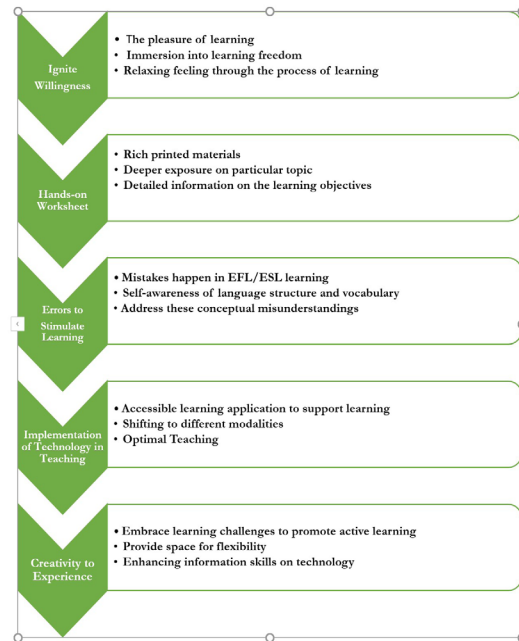


Figure 1. Major Themes and Subthemes

CONCLUSIONS

With regard to the critical requirements of ELLs, this study offers in-depth insight into the experience and expectations of English language teachers. To determine ELLs' needs, insights are identified. Participants identified their distinct experience that make the most of the teaching process effective. Participants asserted that in order to give English lessons that are relevant, teachers must encourage their ELL students to start the learning process. It is in line with the results of Lee & Drajadi (2019) that learners' willingness assures they will benefit from what they learn and gives them the capacity to participate in the discourse. To fully immerse ELLs in English culture and the language's actual context, it is essential to have this understanding.

As highlighted by the study participants, providing hands-on worksheets help ELLs achieve the learning objectives. The incorporation of active learning will improve the literacy of ELLs, and they can be more motivated to work on a piece of knowledge they feel is pertinent to their requirements. The data indicates that ELLs will be able to familiarize themselves with learning objectives and expose themselves to a wide-range of vocabulary and it is similar to the research of Handley et al. (2011). When students are given space to explore in more detail in understanding a topic, they will be more familiar with the mistakes they tend to make in English; however, when students believe they are making too many mis-

takes or could be failing at something, the emotional impact can be difficult to manage. To deal with the emotions in this situation, the teacher's cautious direction is necessary.

Regardless of this study's limitations, the teaching experience exhibited by the participants in this study has meaningful implications for novice teacher preparation in their teaching field. The most important is that English language teaching, in fact, tend to emphasize active learning over rote learning. The study contends that English language teaching will be successful if ELLs have the willingness to learn and explore the language. The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies that English teachers may have different kind of knowledge and how to transform and deliver the content and knowledge to the learners.

The aspiration of this study is to ensure that English Language Learners (ELLs) are well-prepared for success in higher education by ensuring that their teachers have provided sufficient instruction in the English language. ELLs should be encouraged to make an effort to adapt English to various situations. To ensure the quality of teaching, increase student participation in learning, and boost learning outcomes, teachers must have the courage to confront difficulties in the classroom and propose appropriate solutions for revolution (Hsieh et al., 2014). As English language teachers acknowledge that technology enhances learning and creativity results in experience, ELLs' skills will advance.

In an effort to enhance school administration, teaching, and students' learning and performance, a school principal should use their leadership abilities to encourage teachers to acquire information technology training, develop their skills in using technology to administration and teaching, and establish a collaborative and encouraging learning environment. Language instruction that emphasizes communication had become more common. So, it was thought of that computers and the internet could be used as instruments to help language learners and native speakers have real-world conversations. (Suparyanto dan Rosad (2015, 2020). Fundamentally, teaching and learning of ELLs should substantially integrate in digital literacy.

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