

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research background, questions, purposes, and contributions. It outlines the need for authentic assessment methods to develop students' English Digital Fluency, particularly through project-based approaches. The research focuses on how such assessments are implemented by teachers to develop students' English Digital Fluency (EDF), and which aspects of students' English Digital Fluency (EDF) are developed through their engagement in project-based assessment tasks. The study aims to provide theoretical insights, and empirical evidence to support English Digital Fluency development in language learning.

1.1 Background of The Research

The concept of what it means to be literate has drastically changed over the last few decades. The notion of what constitutes literacy has reflected broader societal and technological developments (Baykal, 2021). In ELT practices and beyond, students are increasingly exposed to a variety of texts daily, where visuals and other design elements are essential (Jewitt, 2009; Serafini, 2015, as cited in Baykal, 2021). The imperativeness of improving this digital literacy competence is due to the emergence of new types of texts and new contexts of communication and the profound changes of the patterns and forms of information from paper format to a digital one (Kustini, 2020). In line with these shifts, Hendrawaty (2024) emphasizes that the growing integration of technology in EFL instruction represents not just a tool for learning but a fundamental aspect of a new literacy—one that requires learners to engage with digital platforms critically, creatively, and communicatively.

Building on this perspective, it becomes evident that literacy in the digital age cannot stop at the level of digital literacy alone (Caton et al., 2022). Research by Caton et al. (2022) shows that students are expected to move beyond basic technological use and develop Digital Fluency—the ability to think critically, remain flexible, and transfer technological skills across various fields. The need for

Digital Fluency (DF) arises from the abundance of complex online information and its inconsistent presentation. Digital Fluency (DF) is defined as the ability to leverage technology to create new knowledge and solve problems through critical thinking and social intelligence (Wang et al., 2013; Caton, 2022). In this study, Digital Fluency is conceptualized as English Digital Fluency (EDF), referring to the Digital Fluency required by students within the context of English language learning. This concept is adapted from Silva et al. (2018) and has been modified to align with the research context, learners' needs, and the criteria established by the researcher.

However, despite the importance of English Digital Fluency (as conceptualized in this study), classroom reality shows a different condition. Although students are generally familiar with digital tools, their use of technology in English learning remains mostly about operating tools rather than creating content field. From the interview result, it was indicated that students mainly use technology for entertainment and basic communication, yet struggle when they were required to produce meaningful digital content for academic purposes. Many students have difficulty organizing ideas in English, selecting appropriate digital resources, editing videos effectively, and presenting information clearly in multimodal formats. This means that students' digital engagement does not yet reflect English Digital Fluency (EDF), but rather limited digital literacy.

Additionally, students demonstrate low confidence and limited awareness when using digital tools in academic contexts. They often rely heavily on templates, copy materials from the internet without evaluation, and show minimal reflection on the quality of their digital work. As a result, video projects tend to prioritize visual appearance rather than content depth, language accuracy, or communicative intention. This situation points to the absence of structured guidance and assessment criteria that explicitly support the development of English Digital Fluency (EDF) in classrooms.

To address this issue, intentional pedagogical strategies are required to integrate technology meaningfully into learning activities (Shrosbree, 2008). In this study, teachers assign video projects to eleventh-grade students related to analytical

explanation texts, with a primary focus on developing students' English-speaking and writing skills. Students create videos using camera devices, editing applications, and digital platforms to communicate ideas in English orally. However, without appropriate assessment frameworks, such digital tasks risk becoming product-oriented rather than competence-oriented.

These conditions demand a shift toward more dynamic and authentic assessment practices in ELT. As stated by Kearney (2006), digital video projects require assessment approaches that extend beyond traditional testing. One such approach is Project-Based Assessment (PBA), which emphasizes assessment through planning, problem-solving, collaboration, and real-world tasks (Majid, 2014; Bell, 2010).

Numerous studies confirm that PBA enhances motivation (Kharisma et al., 2025), confidence (Záborská, 2024), and language skills (Arifin, 2025). Moreover, Hafner (2014), Yang and Wu (2012), and García-Peñalvo (2020) reveal that digital projects foster digital competence and creativity. However, research integrating English Digital Fluency (EDF) criteria into Project-Based Assessment (PBA) remains limited. Most studies focus on general digital literacy or language outcomes, while few examine English Digital Fluency (EDF) as an assessable construct. Furthermore, little empirical evidence identifies how English Digital Fluency (EDF) is reflected in students' actual project artifacts.

This research was conducted with eleventh-grade senior high school students to examine how Project-Based Assessment (PBA) supports students' English Digital Fluency (EDF) development. The study addressed the gap between technological exposure and digital competence by exploring how assessment design influences students' ability to use digital tools critically, creatively, and communicatively. Therefore, this research is entitled **“Optimizing Project-Based Assessment (PBA) in Developing Students' English Digital Fluency.”**

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background provided, the following questions arise:

1. How does the teacher apply Project Based-Assessment (PBA) in supporting the development of students' English Digital Fluency?

2. How can students' English Digital Fluency (EDF) be reflected through their video project outcome?

1.3. Research Purposes

This study aims to investigate the implementation of Project-Based Assessment (PBA) in English language learning and its role in supporting the development of students' English Digital Fluency (EDF). Specifically, this research seeks to examine how the teacher applies Project-Based Assessment (PBA) in the learning process to facilitate students' development of English Digital Fluency.

In addition, this study aims to analyze how students' English Digital Fluency (EDF) is reflected through their video project outcomes, particularly in terms of oral communication, digital collaboration, and creative digital production. The study also explores how students demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively in spoken English, work collaboratively with peers, and utilize digital tools to produce meaningful and creative video projects.

Furthermore, this research intends to highlight the creative aspects of Project-Based Assessment (PBA), especially in digital video production tasks, where creativity is reflected in idea originality, technical skills such as video editing and image integration, and overall project quality. Ultimately, the study aims to demonstrate how PBA can function both as an assessment tool and a pedagogical approach that supports students' digital competence, creativity, and communicative skills in line with twenty-first century learning demands.

1.4. Contribution

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the field of English Language Teaching by providing a focused understanding of how Project-Based Assessment (PBA) is applied by teachers to support the development of students' English Digital Fluency (EDF). Theoretically, this study contributes to assessment literature by clarifying how the application of PBA in English learning extends assessment beyond language achievement toward the development of digital competencies. By situating PBA within the context of 21st-century skills, this study explains how assessment practices

incorporate multimodal communication, collaboration, and creativity. Furthermore, by applying the English Digital Fluency framework proposed by Silva et al. (2018), particularly the dimensions of Content Production, Teamwork, and Virtual Resilience, this research provides empirical insight into how students' English Digital Fluency is developed and reflected through their video project outcomes.

Practically, the findings offer guidance for English teachers in designing and applying Project-Based Assessment strategies that promote students' English Digital Fluency through meaningful project work. This study also provides educators with a framework to evaluate students' English Digital Fluency based on observable performance in digital products rather than solely relying on traditional linguistic assessment. Additionally, the findings may inform school leaders and policymakers on the role of Project-Based Assessment in supporting digital competency development in English learning contexts.

By focusing on the application of PBA and students' video-based project outcomes, this study addresses a research gap concerning how EDF is developed and demonstrated in authentic learning tasks. Therefore, this research contributes to a more practical and evidence-based understanding of Project-Based Assessment as a strategy for fostering students' English Digital Fluency.