

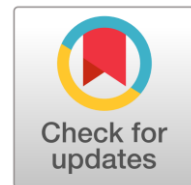


Digitalization of English Language Learning: Understanding the Learning Styles of Millennials in Riau and Kepulauan Riau

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Abstract

Purpose - This research is motivated by the rapidly evolving digital landscape and the distinct preferences of this generation, the research aims to explore the extent of technology integration in English language instruction, the experiences of educators in utilizing technology, the challenges they confront, and the strategies they employ for effective teaching.

Design/methodology/approach - mix method is used in this research by gathering quantitative and qualitative data.

Findings/result - Quantitative analysis reveals that an impressive 88.89% of English lecturers in Riau and Kepulauan Riau have enthusiastically incorporated technology into their teaching, utilizing various digital tools. Furthermore, 87.04% of educators have actively engaged in technology integration workshops, underscoring their dedication to continuous professional development in an ever-changing educational environment. However, it's essential to acknowledge that 68.32% of these educators have encountered challenges related to technology access, internet connectivity, and pedagogical concerns. Qualitative insights from interviews with educators uncover a range of effective technology tools, including language learning apps, educational games, online platforms, and the integration of educational content from platforms like YouTube.

Originality/value - This article offers valuable insights into the digitalization of English language learning in the context of Millennial learners in Riau and Kepulauan Riau, emphasizing the significance of technology integration and the necessity for ongoing professional development to address the multifaceted challenges posed by digital education.

Paper type - Research paper

Keywords: Digitalization, English Language Learning, Millennials, Technology Integration

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Introduction

Education is constantly changing, and today's students, often referred to as Millennials or Generation Y, have unique needs and preferences when it comes to learning especially in learning a language. Millennials is defined as those born between 1981 and 2000 and are the largest cohort, numbering around 88 million. (Cahill & Sedrak, 2012).

Teaching languages effectively to Millennials is highly important for several reasons: First, global Communication: In our interconnected world, language skills are vital for effective global communication. Proficiency in multiple languages can open up opportunities for personal, academic, and professional growth. Second, career Advancement: Multilingual individuals are often more competitive in the job market. Language skills can enhance employment prospects, provide access to international job opportunities, and lead to higher earning potential. Third, adaptation to Globalization: As the world continues to globalize, knowing multiple languages is a key tool for staying relevant and competitive in various fields. Fourth, technological Advancements: Language learning can enable better utilization of technology and communication tools. Proficiency in languages can empower individuals to navigate digital content effectively.

Millennials faces several challenges when learning a foreign language. Some of these challenges include: (Susanti 2023) a). Dependence on Technology: Millennials is often heavily reliant on technology, which can be a barrier to learning a foreign language. They may tend to use translation applications or rely on online translations rather than truly understanding and using the foreign language. b). Anxiety about Proficiency: Some members of Millennials may feel anxious about their ability to learn a foreign language, especially if they have no prior experience in learning a new language. This anxiety can hinder their willingness to try. c). Lack of Social Interaction: Learning a foreign language often requires social interaction, such as speaking with native speakers or participating in language study groups. Millennials, who may be more inclined toward digital

communication, might lack direct social interaction, which can hinder their ability to practice speaking the foreign language.

They've grown up in a world filled with technology and social changes, and this has shaped how they like to learn. This research is all about understanding how they learn and how teachers can adjust their teaching to match these preferences.

Furthermore, this generation's unique needs and preferences have been accentuated by the rapid acceleration of remote and online learning due to global events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital divide, which affects access to technology and the internet, has become a significant issue, making it even more critical to adapt teaching methods to meet the learning needs of Millennials.

Research Purpose

So, this research will dive into Millennials' learning styles and how teachers can make education work better for them by using digital media as what they need. By doing this, it is hoped to help teachers and educational institutions provide a better education for today's students and those in the future. This research is like a guide for teachers and educational institutions to make learning easier and more enjoyable for today's students and prepare for the future of education.

State Of Arts

Learning is an ongoing journey, characterized by a series of actions aimed at achieving specific outcomes. Within this context, obstacles to learning can impede or even halt this journey. Nevertheless, a well-designed approach to learning can overcome these obstacles, tailoring the learning experience to the individual. One of these challenges pertains to the misalignment of the teaching and learning methods. Ineffectively utilizing methods, techniques, and strategies with learners may contribute to this hindrance. Identifying the learner's unique learning style can facilitate effective learning.

Each student possesses a distinct learning style and preferences that cater to their individual needs. Some may easily identify their predominant learning style, while others may adapt to different styles based on the context. Teachers play a crucial role in understanding not only what their students learn but also how they learn it. For many

years, educators have acknowledged the individuality of students, acknowledging that they possess distinct learning styles that enhance their understanding of the material. It's imperative for teachers to grasp that awareness of students' learning styles is the key to unlocking the potential of the classroom. A well-informed teacher can tailor their instruction to align with students' preferences, employing suitable methods and techniques to create a harmonious learning environment.

Educators should be cognizant of the fact that students are diverse individuals, particularly in terms of their learning styles. While most educators are aware of the existence of various learning styles, fully integrating this awareness into the classroom has often been overlooked. Recognizing and understanding these diverse learning styles is a vital step toward cultivating a classroom environment that maximizes students' success. Faculty should have a deep understanding of these styles to tailor their instructional methods more effectively. The performance and achievement of students can be closely linked to their learning preferences. A teacher's comprehension of their students' learning styles plays a crucial role in determining the students' success.

According to the research conducted by (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015), the preferred learning methods of millennials employees include hands-on experience, interactive learning, classroom-based learning, case studies/business games, action learning, accessibility on smartphones, and video games and the preferred teaching methods for Millennials learners include interactive and experiential learning, blended learning, simulation, mentoring/coaching, and business games/case studies.

Some characteristics of Millennials students in the classroom include their preference for multitasking, their reliance on technology and digital media, and their desire for interactive and engaging learning experiences. They are also known for valuing collaboration and teamwork, seeking purpose and making a difference in the world, and having a strong desire for work-life balance. (Reilly, 2006)

Teachers can engage and motivate Millennials students in the classroom by understanding their characteristics and adopting teaching strategies that work with them. Here are some strategies that have been suggested: a) Incorporate technology and digital media: Millennials students are highly reliant on technology and digital media.

Teachers can use tools such as PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos, and interactive online platforms to make the learning experience more engaging and interactive. (Eckleberry-Hunt & Tucciarone 2011). b) Provide interactive and hands-on learning experiences: Millennials students prefer active and experiential learning. Teachers can incorporate activities such as simulations, role plays, group discussions, and project-based learning to make the classroom experience more interactive and engaging. (Balahur & Chen 2020). c) Foster collaboration and teamwork: Millennials students value collaboration and teamwork. Teachers can create opportunities for group work, collaborative projects, and peer-to-peer learning to promote collaboration and enhance engagement.(Balahur & Chen 2020). d) Make learning relevant and purposeful: Millennials students seek purpose and want to make a difference in the world. Teachers can connect the content to real-world issues and challenges, and provide opportunities for students to apply their learning in meaningful ways. (Khamkhien 2010). e) Provide a supportive and caring classroom environment: millennial students respond well to a warm and caring classroom environment. Teachers can build positive relationships with students, show empathy, and be responsive to their individual needs and interests.(Marzá 2012). f) Use a variety of teaching methods and materials: Millennials students have diverse learning styles and preferences. Teachers can incorporate a variety of teaching methods and materials, such as visual aids, hands-on activities, multimedia resources, and interactive technologies, to cater to different learning styles and keep students engaged.(Chamot 2004). g) Offer regular encouragement and guidance on technology use: Millennials students are comfortable with technology, but teachers may need to provide regular encouragement and guidance on how to effectively use new technologies in the classroom. Younger teachers can serve as mentors to older teachers in integrating technology into their teaching practices.(Risdianto and Maret 2022)

English teachers need to do two things: (1) pursue an understanding of the nature of Millennials and (2) adopt teaching strategies that respond to their academic needs. (Reilly 2012)

"Brave New Digital Classroom: Technology and Foreign Language Learning" by Robert J. Blake explores the integration of technology into foreign language education. It

delves into the impact of technology on language learning and teaching methods, discusses various digital resources and tools for language learners, addresses effective pedagogical approaches, and highlights both the benefits and challenges associated with technology in language education. The book provides valuable insights for educators and researchers interested in the dynamic intersection of technology and foreign language learning.(Blake 2013).

Technology facilitates engagement between educators and students, delivers information in an understandable manner, fosters the development of critical thinking abilities in learners, shifts the focus of learning and teaching towards students, encourages learner independence, boosts their self-assurance, and enhances learners' drive to effectively acquire a new language.(Ahmadi 2018)

To effectively incorporate technology into language classes, it is imperative for both educators and learners to embrace new roles and employ existing technologies appropriately. Clearly, a fundamental goal of technology-enhanced language learning and teaching is to boost learners' enthusiasm and cultivate their interest in learning, offering a pragmatic approach to engage them in the language acquisition journey. The literature highlights the importance of teachers possessing a combination of pedagogical and technical competencies. When teachers are well-versed in both these areas, they can proficiently integrate technology into their language classes, thereby enhancing the overall educational experience.(Gilakjani, 2017)

Method

Participants

Due to the easy access to collect the data, the participants of the study were 27 English Lecturers in Riau and Kepulauan Riau. 8 lecturers have been teaching English for less than 5 years, 14 of them have been teaching for 5 to 10 years, and 5 have been teaching for more than 10 years.

Research Focus

The research focused on three main aspects: a) The use of technology in English language learning: This dimension explored how English lecturers incorporated

technology into their teaching practices, whether through traditional teaching materials or digital applications. The goal was to understand the extent to which technology was integrated into their teaching methods. b) Experience in technology integration: The study aimed to assess the level of professional development among English lecturers concerning technology integration. This involved understanding whether educators had actively engaged in training or seminars related to the integration of technology in language learning, both in online and offline contexts. It also sought to gauge their willingness to adapt and learn in response to the evolving digital landscape. c) Challenges and success: The research delved into the challenges faced by English lecturers when integrating technology into their teaching methods. These challenges encompassed various aspects, such as limited access to devices, internet connectivity issues, and varying levels of technological proficiency among students and educators. Furthermore, the study explored the successes and effective practices experienced by the English lecturers in using technology for language education.

Instruments and Data Collection

To collect the data, the research employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative aspect involved the use of questionnaires as a survey method. A questionnaire was designed by the researcher to collect responses from the English lecturers. The questionnaire comprised two parts: the first part collected demographic information about the participants, including their institutional affiliation and the duration of their English teaching experience. The second part consisted of yes-no questions that aimed to provide a foundation for addressing the research questions. The questionnaire included a total of 18 items. To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to 22 universities and colleges in Indonesia. The validation process involved testing the questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, which is a common method to assess the internal consistency of a questionnaire. In this study, the reliability of the questionnaire was found to be 0.87, indicating a high level of internal consistency and reliability in the data collection instrument. In addition to the quantitative data collected through questionnaires, the research also incorporated a qualitative component. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted with four randomly selected participants among the English lecturers. These interviews aimed to elicit more in-depth and nuanced information about the digitalization of English language learning and aligning it with the learning needs of millennials.

The interviews focused on various aspects, including the types of technology or tools that the English lecturers found most effective in teaching English to millennials. It provided insights into practical experiences and effective strategies used by educators. Additionally, the interviews explored the English lecturers' perceptions of the need for continuous development of their technology skills in English teaching, underlining their commitment to staying updated with the latest tools and trends. Moreover, the interviews probed into the main challenges faced by English lecturers when integrating technology into English language teaching. These challenges encompassed aspects such as limited access to devices and stable internet connections, the need to keep students engaged in a digital learning environment, designing effective assessment methods, and addressing internet connectivity issues. The interviews shed light on the real-world hurdles faced by educators as they navigate the evolving landscape of technology-enhanced education. By combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, this research sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the integration of technology in English language teaching for millennials and the experiences and perspectives of English lecturers in Riau and Kepulauan Riau. The data collected through questionnaires and interviews offers valuable insights into the challenges and successes of integrating technology in language education, ultimately contributing to the improvement of teaching practices in the digital age.

Result & Discussion

This study utilized a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The quantitative approach involved employing percentage analysis and descriptive analysis, including Mean and Standard Deviation, to investigate the utilization of technology in English language learning, the experiences related to technology integration, and the challenges and successes in this integration.

Table I. Findings from the Questionnaire Analysis

No	Indicators	Percentage
1	The use of technology in English language learning	88.89
2	Experience in technology integration workshop	87.04
3	Challenges in technology integration	68.32

Table I shows 88.89% English lecturers have used technology in their teaching. Moreover, there are 87.04% English lecturers have attended training or seminars on the integration of technology in language learning, both online and offline. 68.32% English lecturers face many challenges in integrating the technology.

The researcher also conducted interviews with several English language lecturers to gather more in-depth information about the digitalization of English language learning to align with the learning needs of millennials.

"What types of technology or tools have you found most effective in teaching English to millennials?"

"I've found that language learning apps, like Duolingo and Babbel, are highly effective with millennials. These apps offer interactive lessons and gamified activities that engage students in a fun and educational way."

"Games like Kahoot! and Quizlet have been particularly effective. They turn learning into a competition, and students enjoy the challenge."

"Online platforms such as Rosetta Stone and Memrise have been quite effective. They provide comprehensive language courses with multimedia content that appeals to the multimedia-savvy millennials."

"millennials is very active on YouTube, so I've integrated educational channels. These videos offer real-world language examples and cultural insights."

Do you feel the need to continue developing your technology skills in English teaching?

"Absolutely, I believe that technology is rapidly evolving, and staying updated with the latest tools and trends is essential to provide the best learning experience for my students. Continuous learning is a priority."

"Yes, as technology advances, so do the opportunities for innovative teaching. I see it as a responsibility to keep honing my technology skills to offer students the most relevant and engaging learning experience."

"I recognize the importance of ongoing professional development in technology. It not only benefits my teaching but also helps me remain adaptable in an ever-changing educational landscape."

"Continual development in technology skills is a necessity. I understand that my students are tech-savvy, and I need to stay ahead to meet their learning needs."

What are the main challenges you face when integrating technology into English language teaching?

"One of the main challenges is limited access to devices and stable internet connections. This affects our ability to fully adopt technology. Besides, we also have limited technological skills, which can hinder our ability to use and navigate digital tools effectively."

"Keeping students engaged and motivated in a digital learning environment can be challenging. It requires creative approaches and active participation."

"Designing effective assessment methods and providing timely feedback in an online or technology-enabled environment can be more complex than in traditional classrooms, I am lack the necessary training to effectively integrate technology into their teaching methods. Continuous professional development is important."

"Internet connectivity issues can disrupt online classes, making it challenging to maintain a seamless learning experience, particularly for students in areas with poor connectivity. ensuring that different software and applications used are compatible and work smoothly together can be a technical challenge."

The interview responses revealed that educators have discovered various technology and tools that are highly effective in teaching English to millennials. These include language learning apps like Duolingo and Babbel, educational games such as Kahoot! and Quizlet, online platforms like Rosetta Stone and Memrise, and the integration of educational channels on platforms like YouTube. When asked about their willingness to further enhance their technology skills in English teaching, educators expressed a strong commitment to continuous professional development. They recognize that technology is rapidly evolving, and staying updated with the latest tools and trends is vital to provide students with the most relevant and engaging learning experiences.

Despite the advantages of technology integration, several challenges were identified. These challenges include limited access to devices and stable internet connections, difficulties in keeping students engaged in a digital learning environment, designing effective assessment methods and providing timely feedback, and addressing internet connectivity issues and software compatibility challenges in online classes. Continuous professional development was highlighted as an essential component to

address these challenges and ensure effective technology integration in English language teaching.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the integration of technology in English language teaching for millennials, as perceived by English language lecturers. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the use of technology, experiences in technology integration, challenges, and successes in this endeavor.

Some experts has described key characteristics of Millennials that distinguish them from previous generations include: a) Digital Natives: Millennials members are digital natives, having grown up with technology as an integral part of their lives. They are highly proficient in using digital devices and expect technology to be integrated into their learning experiences.(Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al. 2017) b) Preference for Active Learning: They often prefer active, hands-on learning experiences over passive, lecture-style teaching. Collaborative and experiential learning methods resonate with them more effectively.(Shepherd, 2020). c) Desire for Immediate Feedback: Millennials students seek immediate feedback on their progress. They appreciate timely assessments and evaluations to gauge their understanding and performance.(Gilakjani 2017). d) Customization and Relevance: They value customized learning experiences that are relevant to their future careers and interests. Traditional, one-size-fits-all educational approaches may not resonate with them.(Tantarangsee 2011). e) Social Connectivity: Social interaction and peer collaboration play a significant role in their learning. They are accustomed to connecting with peers and accessing information through social networks and online communities. (Achmad Ali Fikri Syamsul Arifin 2022)

These characteristics have created a gap between the teaching methods traditionally employed in educational institutions and the preferences and expectations

of Millennials students. As a result, educators face challenges in engaging and motivating these learners effectively, potentially reduced learning outcomes.

Use of Technology in English Language Learning:

Table I indicates that a substantial majority, 88.89% of English lecturers, have incorporated technology in their teaching practices. This suggests a high level of adoption of technology, whether through the use of digital applications or traditional hard media. The widespread use of technology in English language learning reflects the recognition of its potential to enhance pedagogical practices and meet the learning preferences of millennials, who are inherently tech-savvy.

That finding in line with Robert J. Blake, a leading researcher in digital language learning, emphasizes that technology in language education offers opportunities for personalized and interactive learning. He contends that the integration of technology can empower students to take control of their learning and engage with language in authentic contexts.(Blake 2013)

Experience in Technology Integration:

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that 87.04% of English lecturers have actively engaged in training or seminars related to the integration of technology in language learning. This high percentage suggests that educators are proactively seeking professional development opportunities to enhance their technology skills. Such active participation in training underscores the commitment of English lecturers to stay abreast of the latest trends and best practices in technology-enhanced teaching.

Challenges in Technology Integration:

Despite the evident enthusiasm for technology integration, the study identifies that 68.32% of English lecturers encounter challenges in the process. These challenges are multifaceted, including limited access to devices, internet connectivity issues, and

varying levels of technological proficiency among students and teachers. The qualitative data from interviews provide deeper insights into these challenges.

Ota's literature review highlights the significance of technology in language learning. Ota notes that technology provides a bridge for learners to interact with the language, offering comprehensible input and promoting learners' autonomy, which aligns with the findings of this study.(Ota et al., 2011)

Effectiveness of Technology Tools:

In response to the question about the most effective technology tools for teaching millennials, the interviewed lecturers cited a range of digital resources. Language learning apps, such as Duolingo and Babbel, were highlighted for their interactive and gamified approach, engaging students in a fun and educational manner. Educational games, such as Kahoot! and Quizlet, were found effective in turning learning into a competitive and engaging experience. Online language learning platforms, like Rosetta Stone and Memrise, offer comprehensive multimedia content that caters to the multimedia-savvy millennials. Additionally, leveraging YouTube and educational channels was emphasized to provide real-world language examples and cultural insights.

Continuous Professional Development:

The responses regarding the need for continuous professional development in technology skills for English teaching underline the dynamic nature of technology and its role in education. English lecturers expressed their commitment to ongoing learning, recognizing that it is essential to remain effective educators in the face of rapidly evolving technology.

Challenges in Technology Integration:

The challenges identified in technology integration reveal some of the hurdles that educators face when implementing technology in English language teaching. Limited

access to devices and stable internet connections pose significant barriers, impacting the ability to fully harness the potential of technology. The varying technological skills among students and teachers further compound these challenges.

The findings of this research are correlated with Othman and Amin's case study in Malaysia, which underscores the critical significance of teachers' perceptions and practices in integrating technology into English language teaching. Both studies emphasize how the attitudes and beliefs of lecturers profoundly influence the effectiveness of incorporating technology into teaching methodologies. This research, like Othman and Amin's study, acknowledges the pivotal role of teachers' perspectives and actions, highlighting that the successful integration of technology depends on educators' readiness to adopt new tools and approaches. Furthermore, the challenges and achievements identified in your research mirror the observations made in Othman and Amin's study, illustrating the common hurdles faced by educators globally and the strategies they employ to overcome them when integrating technology into language education. (Othman & Amin 2022)

Maintaining student engagement in a digital learning environment emerged as a crucial concern. It requires creative teaching approaches and active participation to ensure that students remain motivated and focused. Additionally, the complexity of designing effective assessments and providing timely feedback in an online or technology-enabled environment was highlighted.

In conclusion, this study underscores the importance of technology in English language teaching for millennials and the commitment of English lecturers to harness its potential. While challenges exist, including access limitations and the need for ongoing professional development, the benefits of technology integration in enhancing learning experiences and meeting the needs of tech-savvy students are clear. Addressing these challenges and fostering continued professional development will be crucial for successfully navigating the digital landscape of English language education.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has provided valuable insights into the digitalization of English language learning for millennials, as observed through the perspectives of English language lecturers in the Riau and Kepulauan Riau. The study revealed a significant adoption of technology in English language teaching, with 88.89% of lecturers actively incorporating technology into their teaching methods. These findings underscore the acknowledgment of technology's potential to enhance pedagogical practices and cater to the learning preferences of millennials, a digitally-native demographic.

Furthermore, a notable 87.04% of English lecturers have proactively engaged in training and professional development opportunities related to the integration of technology in language learning. This commitment to continuous learning reflects the dynamic nature of technology and its evolving role in education. As technology rapidly advances, ongoing professional development becomes an imperative for educators to remain effective in meeting the needs of tech-savvy students.

However, the study also highlighted challenges in technology integration, with 68.32% of English lecturers encountering obstacles. These challenges include limited access to devices, internet connectivity issues, and varying levels of technological proficiency among both students and educators. To ensure the successful integration of technology, addressing these challenges and fostering continuous professional development are essential.

Based on the findings of this research, it recommends for ongoing research of technology trends and their impact on English language learning should be conducted. This will help educators stay ahead of the curve and adapt to emerging technologies effectively.

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