

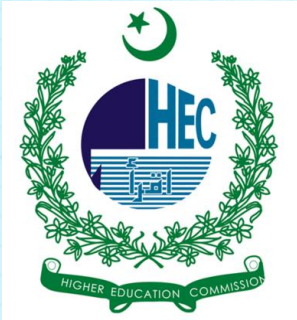
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**Decoding Language Discourse: Unlocking Digital and Media Literacy among English Language Learners in Pakistan**



**<sup>1</sup>Imran Hussain**

**<sup>2</sup>Muhammad Naeem Babar**

**<sup>3</sup>Muhammad Arshad**

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Language & Literature, The University of Lahore, Lahore.

[imranhussain.uol@gmail.com](mailto:imranhussain.uol@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Department of English Linguistics & Literature, Riphah International University, Islamabad.

[naeembabar258@gmail.com](mailto:naeembabar258@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Education, Muslim Youth University, Islamabad. [ctscpdkhan02@gmail.com](mailto:ctscpdkhan02@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

Current study is meant to explore the digital and media related contents, thematic patterns and textual illustrations being incorporated in language discourse i.e. English Language Textbooks (ELT) and their impact in fostering the digital media literacy among English Language Learners (ELLs) of Pakistan. In addition, it is meant to pinpoint the key strategies ELT textbooks' discourse implies to influence and foster digital and media literacy among ELLs. In order to achieve the objectives in a befitting manner, the researcher has made use of qualitative analysis method. He has collected data from ELT textbooks of grade 6 and 7. In addition, the purposive sampling technique has been implied to delimit the data. Data is analysed through content, thematic, and textual analysis techniques. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) has been utilized as a theoretical framework for analysis. Findings of the study indicate that ELT textbooks have utilized various contents, textual and thematic patterns to foster digital and media literacy among ELLs. Visual, photographs, textual, and thematic illustrations are also proficiently consumed to foster digital and media literacy. The study has indicated that ELT textbooks discourse acted as a moving agent to foster digital and media literacy among ELLs by making use of digital and media related tools, practical implications, and connecting them with everyday life.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, Media Literacy, ELT Textbooks, ELLs, Thematic Patterns, Contents Illustration

**Introduction**

Nowadays, the world has transformed not only in terms of its physical features but also socially, culturally, and economically as well. In order to meet the challenges of time and space in all walks of life, there has been an increasing pressure on education and instructional process to prepare the young minds in order to cope with the unknown future (Robbins, 2017). Hence, all stakeholders related to the instructional process have changed curricula to make it in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Boholano, 2017). In this regard, the role of textbooks as a mean of instruction, especially ELT textbooks, has attained even a higher place to make instructional activities centred on

those skills which are known as 21<sup>st</sup> century skills to mould the ELLs to meet the rapid and complex changes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Paulsen, 2017). Life and education have become digital and global, and in order to meet this objective, diverse frameworks, policies, and practises have been devised by educationists (Chalkiadaki, 2018; Menggo, 2022).

There was a growing concern among educationists that what was and how was being taught to the learners was not inclined towards meeting the global and digital criteria of 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. Likewise, ELLs are also in quest of the curricula that must involve them into digitally global world through digital, media and information literacy that is not only essential for their personal well-being but also to ensure long-term sustainability of the nation on economic, cultural, societal and political fronts (Chalkiadaki, 2018). In addition, due to digital and global changes, ELT has also changed a great deal in order to supply creative, collaborative, critical thinkers, leaders, capable and productive individuals to society through inculcation of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills among ELLs (Giri, 2016). It is also key point that when the world is changing into digital and informed phenomena through digital and information or media literacy, the education and learners cannot be left behind as these are the shoulders who have to steer the nation in future and to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century needs (Bandelli, 2017).

### **Research Objectives**

Current study is meant to accomplish the subsequent research objectives

1. To figure out the components related to digital literacy from the ELT textbooks being taught in Pakistan under SNC 2023.
2. To highlight the thematic patterns being infused in ELT textbooks of Pakistan with regard to media literacy.
3. To assess the role of contents and thematic patterns of ELT textbooks of Pakistan in developing digital and media literacy among ELLs.

### **Research Questions**

The under view study is intended as to figure out the answers of the following questions

1. What are the components related to digital literacy incorporated into ELT textbooks in Pakistan?

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2. What thematic patterns with regard to media literacy emerge from the discourse of ELT textbook in Pakistan?
3. How far digital and media related contents assist the learners in developing their digital media literacy?

## **Rationale of the Study**

Present study is meant to explore the digital and media related contents being incorporated in ELT textbooks and their impact in fostering the digital media literacy among ELLs of Pakistan. Current study is intended at due to diverse compelling reasons. Firstly, due to evolving and ever-increasing trend of digitalization of the world, there is a dare need to have it integrated into educational contents. So, it is a key to analyse digital and media related contents in textbooks, especially in ELT. Secondly, digital and media literacy skills are given high weightage in current scenario, so there is an essential need to embed curriculum in line with these skills. The current study is intended to highlight how far ELT textbooks align with this objective and how far current contents of textbooks have assisted ELLs to attain digital media literacy. Thirdly, the study is meant to unearth how far ELT textbooks of Pakistan are keeping pace with the global trends and pedagogical implications of the time.

Fourthly, this study is meant to assess how far contents and thematic patterns with regard to digital and media literacy are there in ELT textbooks and how far these are helpful in the development of ELLs digital and media literacy to cope with the needs and role of these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Hence, study is meant to underline the pedagogical implications of ELT textbook with regard to assist the ELLs keeping pace with the digital world. Fifthly, this study will assist in exploring the needs of integrating critical and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in ELT textbooks with broader and inclusive impacts. Sixthly, this study will empower the educators on one hand by underlining the needs to have more inclusive material with regard to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and will enhance ELLs' preparedness to cope with the needs of time on the other hand. Last but not the least, there is hardly any study being conducted in Pakistan keeping in view the domain the researcher has undertaken, so it is meant to fill that research gap.

## **Delimitations of the Study**

Keeping the objectives and rationale of the study it is delimited as

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- The study is only limited to ELT textbooks of Pakistan.
- It is further delimited to only elementary level.
- To further narrow down, the researcher has sampled only two units from grade 6 and 7 i.e. “*Importance of Science and Technology*” and “*Role of Media.*”
- In addition, the study is only limited to analysis of contents and thematic patterns being projected in those two units and it unearths the impacts of those contents on ELLs in their development of digital and media literacy.

### **Literature Review**

Digital and media literacy (DML) have attained significance persona with the digitalization of the world in all walks of life. Flexible and ease of access to information, radical modifications of digital tools and potential alteration of life at a rapid rate made it compulsory for every individual to be well aware and informed to cope with the digital and information needs. To have access to secure and accurate contents by means of media is termed as media literacy while accessing information by means of digital tools such as computer, internet and artificial machines to think critically, sort, evaluate and criticise those contents and information is relevant to digital literacy (Hamutoğlu et al., 2017). Likewise, accessing the correct information and contents, producing useful and relevant contents and information, inculcation of digital and media tools in instruction, and to manage the accomplishment through digitalization in ultramodern age is regarded as media and digital literacy (Gençer, 2018).

Media literacy that is also a subdomain of digital literacy has marked its appearance in the 1990s when UNESCO defined its role as a core for social well-being at that point of time with regard to production and dissemination of communication spaces (Berber, 2019). Over the passage of time, individual attains such a level of media literacy that individuals become active learners, creative thinkers and begin to question about why and how about the phenomenon around them as well-informed and possessor of 21<sup>st</sup> century digital skills (Gülmüş, 2020). Individual have attained top level thinking, creative and collaborative skills to decode and cope with the complex challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century needs. Media literacy has enabled individual to make personal judgment by inculcating the ability to criticise (Aksu, 2019). Similarly, young minds and learners are more inclined to learn with the

assistance of digital tools and modes as compare to learning from conventional mode and sources.

Role of technology, digitalization and media have refined the young mind to learn, practice, act and manage their learning as well as every other sphere of life (Ulusoy, 2018) and it is possible only through digital and media literacy primarily through textbooks. Domain of digital and media is an alluring field for researchers in the recent past as numerous studies have been conducted such as Kozan, 2018; Bozyel, 2019; Altuner, 2019; Yaman, 2019; Korkmaz, 2020; Cebeci, 2020; Kara, 2021 to explore relationship between digital and media literacy with societal networks. Textbooks evaluation with regard to 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in general and digital and media literacy in particular has also captured the attention of researchers such as Kim, Raza, & Seidman , 2019; Bedir, 2019; Nijat, Rahmani, & Sandaran, 2020; Azeez & Barany, 2022; Chehimi & Alameddine, 2022.

In addition, Dolanbay (2018) explored relationship between social studies and media literacy, Dayanıklı (2019) focused on the digital skills or literacy of teachers Gençer (2018) summed up that media has a strong influence over young mind of learners, Woods et al. (2021) concluded that digital literacy enhances engagement and information retention of the learners and Ali (2022) asserted that digital tools assist in making writing complete through “multi-digital platforms.” But there is hardly any study, especially in Pakistani context, which has been conducted to evaluate ELT textbooks bearing in mind their role in fostering digital and media literacy among ELLs. So, the researcher in the under view study has attempted to fill that research gap and has taken into consider ELT textbooks to analyse how they assist ELLs to foster digital and media literacy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) has been extracted by the researcher as a theoretical framework for analysis of the data being extracted from ELT textbooks. It is a theory that was developed by Mishra and Koehler (2006). This theory is based on a work done by Shulman (1987) who identified interrelation of three segments, i.e. content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK) and technological pedagogical contents knowledge (TPACK). This theoretical framework is a multi-faceted tool for analysis, and the research has utilized it to analyse ELT

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textbooks to scrutinize how far ELT textbooks are designed to foster digital and media literacy among ELLs. In addition, the researcher has assessed how far ELT textbooks incorporate digital and media literacy skills among learners and to what extent digital and media literacy is fostered among ELLs. TPACK framework has assisted the researcher to analyse ELT textbooks on above-mentioned paradigm content knowledge which is analysed under contents or textual analysis, pedagogical knowledge which is analysed through strategies analysis being implied in textbooks and technological knowledge which is scrutinised under digital and media related contents and thematic patterns.

## **Methodology**

Keeping in view the objectives of the study and to have an in depth analysis of the textbooks bearing in mind the content and thematic evaluation, the researcher has utilized a qualitative method of analysis in this study. For that, textual, contents and thematic analysis techniques have been made use of by the researcher. The researcher has analysed the contents of the textbooks to highlight the components with regard to digital and media literacy. He has also highlighted the recurrent themes and their impact on developing digital and media literacy among English Language learners. For that, the researcher has taken into consideration ELT textbooks being taught at elementary level. For selection of textbook, the researcher has framed inclusive criteria as these textbooks are taught throughout Pakistan under SNC 2023. In addition, the researcher has taken the textbooks from diverse levels to ensure diversity of the study.

However, keeping in view the rational and scope of the study, the researcher has sampled books from grade 6 and 7. Data has been collected from the ELT textbooks of two classes. Two units have been sampled for analysis, keeping in view purposive sampling technique. One is taken from grade 6 i.e. “*Importance of Science and Technology*” and second is taken from grade 7 i.e. “*Role of Media*”. In order to ensure the selection of relevant contents from these units, a purposive sampling technique has been employed by the researcher. After the selection of the textbooks and sampling of the relevant contents, the researcher has underlined the thematic patterns and contents with regard to digital and media literacy. Once, thematic progression has been extracted their relevance with regard to fostering digital and

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media literacy among ELLs has been pointed out by the researcher.

## **Findings and Discussion**

### **Analysis of Digital and Technological Elements**

After a thorough analysis of the textbook discourse from grade 6 book i.e. *“Importance of Science and Technology”* it is found that there are diverse digital and technological elements in the unit to foster digital literacy among ELLs. Foremost, the unit has certain visuals, photographs and illustrations that are meant to enhance the digital literacy of the learners. The visuals and photographic resources like Robot, social media platforms and planets have enabled the learners to have in depth comprehension about technological as well as digital literacy. The images related to smartphone, computer and social media outlets are highly relevant to enable the students to grasp the significance of digital tools in their everyday life. These visuals and photo voices are assisted by textual and contents illustration to broaden the vision of ELLs about digitalization. The unit is replete with information about digital tools that are extensively used to reshape human life to enhance the digital literacy of the learners.

The inculcation of digital and technological tools are not limited to any specific walk of life, rather, these are redefining all walks of life. Educational digital tools and their significance are highlighted in the unit as “Students are facilitated with smart classes, multimedia devices, e-libraries, e-books etc.” (PTB p. 103) Online classes and digital mood of assessing educational resources during Covid-19 pandemic is also indicated in the unit to assert the role of digital literacy among ELLs. Digitalization is not mainly limited to education; rather it has reshaped the health and medical field of human bustle. Technology has assisted human to have calories and oil free food with the help of microwave and steam cooker. In addition, medical field has been revolutionised with the assistance of digital and technological tools. It has been illustrated in the unit as “Multiple medical devices like x-rays, scan machines, operation devices, pacemakers and exercise equipment help patients and doctor to deal with diseases” (PTB p. 103).

### **Analysis of Digital Literacy Themes**

After the analysis of the unit *“Importance of Science and Technology”* it is underlined that there are diverse thematic patterns that highlight the inculcation of digital literacy



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among ELLs. The inculcation of digital tools has enabled human being to have easy, flexible and convenient mode of communication. The utilization of digital tools such as “computers, mobile phones, laptops and electronic media have made this world a global village” (PTB p. 103). With the advent of these and numerous other tools, connection with other people around the world is just a click away. This phenomenon has assisted people not only with convenient mode of communication but has also enabled people to grow and broaden their business. The utilization of online business and communication tools has enabled people to flourish and work independently from anywhere and at any time.

Another key theme is the utilization of digital mode of instruction, which has enabled the learners to learn from home. Virtual classroom and instruction became common all over the world during Covid-19 pandemic. The idea of smart classroom emerged during pandemic period has enabled learners to excel in various communicative and interpersonal skills. The world is smartly transformed into a systemic and structured way due to the advent of digital modes of communication, interaction and collaboration. Thirdly, the infusion of digitalization and technology has deep-rooted imprints on society. Society and societal norms are heavily influenced by digitalization. The digital and technological inventions have transformed human life positively. Work from home, better means of communication, online shopping and business, improved working and cooking utensils and advent of robot in human life has reshaped the entire human destiny on the planet, earth.

In addition, digital and technological tools have revolutionised the medical field as well. Death rate has been reduced significantly and standard of human health has been enhanced many times. Medical devices, operational and surgical equipment and calories conscious cooking replete with digital and technology have improved the health standard. Health tips and availability of online consultation with doctor has taken human life to the next level. Last but not the least, digitalization and technological gadgets have assisted people to explore new horizons and planets, to have better and improved version of life. This theme has been summed up in the unit that men have “marked their presence on Mars and are trying to reach other planets too. Science has also made us travel to space and the world has touched the surface of the Moon” (PTB p. 104). All these thematic patterns assert the significance of digital

and technological elements to a great deal to foster digital and technology related literacy among ELLs.

### **Strategies to Enhance Digital Literacy among ELLs**

After data analysis, it is unearthed that the unit "*Importance of Science and Technology*" has made use of various strategies to foster digital and technological literacy among ELLs of Pakistan. Firstly, vocabulary utilization such as innovation, invention, advancement, impact and transformation has enabled the ELLs to master digital literacy. Secondly, making use of multimedia such as visuals, photo voice, illustration and textual contents have promoted the digital literacy of the learners. Thirdly, practical examples like online learning, virtual business, medical tools and cooking utensils have inculcated the practical side of digitalization which foster digital literacy among ELLs. Fourthly, concept of digital and scientific exploration of other planets has enthralling impacts on learners and enhanced their digital literacy manifolds. The utilization of these strategies have enabled the ELLs to think critically, explore the digital world, learn actively and collaboratively, become a productive and proficient digital citizen and adopt a mature and responsible online behaviour.

### **Analysis of Media Literacy Thematic Patterns**

After analysis of the contents and thematic patterns of the unit "*Role of Media*" it is pointed out that this unit very effectively equip the ELLs to have know-how about the necessary skills required to navigate in complex media landscape to be informed. Firstly, the unit highlights the media literacy among ELLs through the introduction of basic media related concept to the learners. In addition, diversity of media modes i.e. print and digital media has also enhanced the media literacy among ELLs. Secondly, the unit has amply propagated the function of media to enhance the media literacy among learners. Media has served to inform, educate, entertain and persuade which has instigated the significance role of media to ELLs. Thirdly, the unit motivates critical thinking among ELLs to evaluate media contents on the basis of bias, credibility, cross-check and authenticity which has assisted a great deal to foster media literacy by having informed judgement on the part of the learners.

Fourthly, through the impacts and effects of media on individual, society and cultural has also imprinted the role of media in developing diverse perspectives and outlook of the learners which is a key as far as the development of media literacy

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among ELLs is concerned. Fifthly, the unit highlights the need for responsible and ethical role of media while educating, informing and persuading the contents which has also served as a key to literate the learners about media literacy. Sixthly, the unit underlines the need to promote learners to write review, blogs and digital contents which have also an inspiring effect on ELLs. Seventhly, the unit assists the learners to have intercultural harmony through positive and constructive role of media, which is inspiring for ELLs. In addition, the unit puts the audience and readers of media in the global context to have better comprehension of global impacts of media on human life, which certainly have moving effects on ELLs towards media.

Thematic patterns of the unit pinpoint that in ultramodern and digital age the role of media is to shape the public opinion, create multiple layers of awareness i.e. political, social and cultural, and enable social media interaction and to foster communicative and interpersonal skills among people and learners alike. Last but not the least, the unit asserts the lifelong learning through media which has instigated ELLs towards develop media literacy. Social and electronic media is assisted by digital tools which is also a key feature to inculcate not only media literacy among ELLs but also enable to foster digital literacy among learners. The significance of media literacy through the utilization of social media platforms has been fostered among learners in the unit, '*The Role of Media*', as "Social media networks like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Instagram have brought a revolution in terms of information and knowledge (PTB p. 119)"

### **Strategies to Enhance Media Literacy among ELLs**

In the unit, '*The Role of Media*' variety of strategies has been implied in order to foster media and digital literacy among ELLs. In order to capture the attention, the unit starts with conceptual exploration of the concept media. Furthermore, the unit motivates critical thinking among ELLs and assists them to decode the media messages. The unit promotes the role of creativity and information literacy among learners, which is a key strategy to foster digital and media literacy among ELLs. Recurrent utilization of the concept of digital media and social media also instigates the learners toward media and digital literacy as a prime tool of everyday life. Creative contents creation and digital blog production have also pinned the need of media literacy among ELLs. The utilization of visuals, photographs and textual

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illustrations is a prime strategy to influence the mind of ELLs towards media literacy. One of the key strategies that the unit employs is the projection of both positive and negative side of the media, which is an influential strategy to influence the mind of ELLs towards media and digital literacy. Furthermore, the unit emphasises that media assists in developing digital, informational, communicative and interpersonal skills among learners which is also a captivating strategy to foster media literacy among ELLs. Thematic patterns of the unit are also a driving force in fostering media literacy among learners. Lastly, the unit stress upon the fact that media literacy is a lifelong skill to decode media contents as key skills to enhance the information literacy skills. Media has a key persona in influencing individual, society and cultural aspects of people in general and ELLs in specific through textbook discourse depicting the need and role of digital and media literacy.

### **Conclusion**

Digital and media literacy are two prime skills that fall under the domain of digital literacy of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills set. After the analysis of the sampled data, it is concluded that both the units contain illustrious amounts of elements that are meant to foster digital and media literacy among ELLs of Pakistan. Visuals, photographs, illustrations, and textual and thematic patterns of both units highlight the need and essentiality of digital and media literacy. In addition, inculcation of smart tools in the contents of the units, i.e. smartphone, laptops, robots, computers, microwaves, and steam cookers are indicative of the fact that ELT textbook discourse proficiently fosters the concept of digital literacy among ELLs. In addition, the textbook discourse of the texts points out the role of the digital mode of instruction, i.e. online and virtual classroom and medical tools like scanner, x-ray, and surgical equipment and exercise machines to foster digital literacy among ELLs. The advent of digital and technological tools has reduced death rate and has enabled people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Science and Technology has assisted man to land on the moon and shoot for the other planets.

All these thematic patterns are meant to foster digital and technological literacy among ELLs. Likewise, the role of media literacy has also been dealt with in the unit “Role of Media.” The unit highlights the role of media as an essential component of the ultramodern age, as it is deeply embedded with multi-faceted layers

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of information and communication literacy. It is asserted that media is key in educating, informing, entertaining, and persuading people. It is even shaping public opinion through blogs and digital contents. Digital media and social media, i.e. Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram have revolutionised communication, interaction, and collaboration among people from around the globe. All this asserts the great power of media at one hand and as to foster media and digital literacy among ELLs on the other. Both the units adopt strategies like inclusion of visual, photographs, illustrations, textual contents, thematic patterns, practical examples, pedagogical implications and relevant and updated digital and media tools to influence the mind of young ELLs to foster digital and media literacy among them in an apt manner.

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