

## The Urgency of Learning English For Gen Z: A Conceptual Framework in The Era of Digital Transformation

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**Abstract:** The rapid development of digital transformation has significantly increased the urgency of learning English, especially for Generation Z as digital natives. English is not only a global communication tool but also an essential skill for accessing information, education, and career opportunities in the digital era. This study aims to explore the importance of English proficiency for Generation Z and to develop a conceptual framework that integrates language skills with digital literacy in the modern era. This research uses a qualitative approach through a *library research* method by analyzing and synthesizing relevant scholarly sources related to English learning, digital transformation, and the characteristics of Generation Z. Data were collected through document analysis of journals, books, and academic articles, and then analyzed using descriptive qualitative techniques. The findings reveal that English plays a crucial role as a global communication tool that enables Generation Z to access information, engage in cross-cultural communication, and improve academic and professional opportunities. In addition, digital literacy and English proficiency are interrelated competencies that are essential for navigating the digital world. However, high exposure to digital content does not automatically guarantee strong English mastery, indicating the need for structured and integrated learning approaches. In conclusion, this study proposes the development of a conceptual framework that integrates English learning and digital skills to prepare Generation Z for global challenges in the era of digital transformation.

**Keywords:** Digital Literacy, English Learning, Gen Z, Language Skills.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading English has become one of the most important languages in the modern world, especially in the era of globalization (Rahmani & Karimi, 2025). It is widely used as an international language for communication across countries and cultures, particularly in fields such as education, science, technology, and business. Many academic resources, scientific publications, and digital platforms are dominated by English, making it a key tool for accessing global knowledge and information.

Learning English is no longer considered an additional skill, but a necessity. Students who have good English proficiency tend to have broader opportunities to continue their studies, both nationally and internationally (Taufik, 2024). Moreover, English competence also plays a significant role in improving students' where communication skills in English are often required.

Considering the growing importance of English skills, it is important to understand how today's learners, especially Gen Z, approach and experience English learning. In this context, Gen Z those born between 1997 and 2012 has unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They grew up and developed alongside advances in digital technology, so their learning style tends to be fast-paced, visual, multitasking, and highly connected to the virtual world (Fajarwati, 2025).

In the digital era, Gen Z often referred to as digital natives has grown up in a technology-rich environment, which has shaped both their lifestyles and their approaches to learning (Lubis & Siregar, 2025). Technology not only influences how they interact with the world but also affects their preferences when acquiring new skills, including learning English.

The concept of "digital natives," introduced by (Lubis & Siregar, 2025) states that individuals who grow up in a highly digital

environment and are accustomed to using technologies such as computers, the internet, and mobile devices from an early age. This generation is recognized as the first to fully experience life in the digital era, where technology becomes an essential and inseparable part of everyday activities.

Therefore, English has become an essential skill in the global era, especially for Gen Z as digital natives. Their technology-driven characteristics influence how they learn, making it necessary to apply adaptive and relevant approaches in English language learning.

## METHOD

Research method is a scientific procedure used to obtain data and analyze it in accordance with the research objectives. According to (Sugiyono, 2021) qualitative research is a method used to understand phenomena in depth through descriptive data in the form of words and documents, not numbers. This study uses a qualitative approach with a *library research* method to examine the role of English in the era of digital transformation for Generation Z.

This study employs a library research approach; therefore, it is not limited to a specific research location. The data were obtained through the exploration of various scientific sources, such as national and international journals, books, and academic articles relevant to English language learning, digital literacy, and the characteristics of Generation Z.

The data in this study consist of all scientific literature discussing English, digital literacy, and Generation Z. The sample of the study includes selected sources chosen purposively based on their relevance to the research focus. The selected sources were considered based on content relevance, publication recency, and the credibility of authors and publishers.

The research procedure was conducted through several stages, namely collecting literature from various academic databases, selecting relevant sources, reading and classifying the data based on main themes, and synthesizing the findings. The analyzed themes include the role of English in digital transformation, the characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives, and the relationship between digital literacy and English proficiency.

The data analysis technique used in this study is descriptive qualitative analysis. The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting important information from the literature, data display involved organizing findings into themes, and conclusion drawing was used to explain the role of English and digital literacy in shaping the competencies of Generation Z in the era of digital transformation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings reveal that English plays a crucial role as a global language in the era of digital transformation, especially for Gen Z. As digital platforms continue to dominate communication and information exchange, English becomes the primary medium used in social media, online learning, and global interactions. This condition makes English proficiency essential for Gen Z to access knowledge, engage in cross-cultural communication, and expand academic as well as professional opportunities. In addition, Gen Z is characterized as digital natives who are highly adaptive to technology and tend to learn through interactive and digital-based media such as videos, online platforms, and social networks, which indirectly support their exposure to English in everyday contexts.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that there is a strong interconnection between English proficiency and digital literacy in shaping the future competencies of Gen Z. The ability to use English enhances their access to global information, while digital literacy enables them to effectively navigate and utilize technological tools. However, the study also finds that high exposure to digital content does not always guarantee strong English mastery, indicating the need for more structured and integrated learning approaches. Therefore, the integration of English learning with digital skills is considered essential to prepare Gen Z to face global challenges and actively participate in the increasingly interconnected digital world.

### Discussion

The urgency of learning English for Gen Z is strongly influenced by the rapid development of digital transformation, which has reshaped communication patterns, access to information,

and global interaction. English has become the dominant language used across digital platforms, including social media, online learning environments, and international collaboration spaces. In this context, English proficiency is not only a linguistic skill but also a strategic competence required to access global knowledge. As emphasized by (Siregar et al., 2026), English functions as a life skill that enables individuals to engage with technological advancements and global communication networks. Therefore, the increasing reliance on digital technology further strengthens the urgency of mastering English among Gen Z learners.

In the era of globalization, English plays a crucial role in connecting individuals from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The widespread use of English in academic publications, digital resources, and international communication highlights its significance as a global lingua franca. Studies indicate that early exposure to English contributes significantly to learners' readiness in facing global challenges and improving their competitiveness in the global workforce. This condition demonstrates that English proficiency is closely linked to opportunities for academic advancement and professional development. Consequently, the urgency of learning English is not merely a trend but a necessity in the modern world.

Gen Z, often referred to as digital natives, exhibits unique characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They have been raised in a technology-driven environment, which shapes their cognitive processes, learning preferences, and communication styles. Gen Z learners are highly connected, technologically literate, and accustomed to accessing information instantly (Demir & Sonmez, 2021). These characteristics influence how they perceive and engage in learning activities, including language acquisition. As a result, traditional teaching methods that rely on passive learning are no longer effective in addressing their needs.

The learning preferences of Gen Z emphasize the importance of interactive, visual, and technology-based instructional approaches. They tend to favor learning environments that incorporate multimedia elements, such as videos, animations, and digital applications. According to (Demir & Sonmez, 2021), Gen Z students expect learning materials to be engaging, flexible, and relevant to real-life contexts. This expectation requires educators to adapt their

teaching strategies to align with the digital habits of learners. Therefore, integrating technology into English language instruction becomes a crucial aspect of effective teaching.

The role of digital platforms in supporting English learning has become increasingly significant in recent years. Social media applications, online learning tools, and digital content provide learners with abundant opportunities to practice and improve their language skills. Platforms such as Instagram can enhance students' motivation and engagement in learning English through interactive and visual features (Lubis & Siregar, 2025). These platforms allow learners to access authentic language input and participate in meaningful communication. As a result, digital media serves as an effective supplementary resource in language learning.

Despite the benefits of digital platforms, challenges remain in ensuring the effectiveness of English learning. One major issue is the tendency of learners to engage with content superficially, which limits the development of deeper language skills. Multitasking and brief interactions with digital content may hinder learners' ability to achieve comprehensive language proficiency (Lubis & Siregar, 2025). This indicates that exposure to English through digital media alone is insufficient without structured learning approaches. Therefore, educators must design strategies that promote active and meaningful engagement with language.

The integration of English proficiency and digital literacy is essential for developing the competencies required in the 21st century. Digital literacy enables learners to navigate, evaluate, and utilize information effectively in digital environments. At the same time, English proficiency allows them to access a wider range of global resources and participate in international communication. This interconnected relationship highlights the importance of combining language skills with technological competence. Without this integration, learners may face limitations in accessing opportunities in the digital world.

Artificial intelligence and advanced technologies further emphasize the importance of English in modern education. Many digital tools and platforms operate primarily in English, requiring users to have a basic level of language proficiency. AI-driven learning environments

demand interactive, personalized, and technology-integrated approaches to meet the expectations of Gen Z learners. This suggests that English is not only a communication tool but also a medium for interacting with emerging technologies. As technology continues to evolve, the demand for English proficiency will continue to increase.

Effective English learning strategies for Gen Z must align with their learning characteristics and preferences. Digital, collaborative, and contextual learning approaches are highly effective in improving students' communicative competence (Fajarwati, 2025). These strategies encourage active participation and engagement in the learning process. By incorporating interactive activities and real-life contexts, learners can develop practical language skills. Therefore, innovative teaching methods are essential in enhancing English learning outcomes.

Collaborative learning plays a significant role in improving English proficiency among Gen Z learners. Digital platforms provide opportunities for students to interact, share ideas, and work together on projects. This interaction fosters communication skills and enhances learners' confidence in using English. Collaborative learning also promotes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic and professional success. As a result, integrating collaborative activities into language instruction is highly beneficial.

Contextual learning is another important approach in English language teaching. This method focuses on connecting language use with real-life situations, making learning more meaningful and relevant. Gen Z learners tend to value practical and applicable knowledge, which makes contextual learning highly effective. By using authentic materials and real-world scenarios, educators can help students understand how language is used in everyday communication. This approach enhances learners' ability to apply their knowledge in different contexts.

The use of digital media in English learning also contributes to increased student motivation. Interactive tools, such as videos, games, and online quizzes, create a more engaging learning environment. These tools capture students' attention and encourage active participation. As motivation is a key factor in language learning, the integration of digital

media can significantly improve learning outcomes. However, maintaining motivation requires continuous innovation in teaching methods.

Despite the advantages of digital learning, several challenges need to be addressed. Limited access to technology and inadequate infrastructure can hinder the implementation of digital-based learning strategies. The lack of teacher training and technological resources remains a major obstacle in many educational contexts (Fajarwati, 2025). These challenges can create disparities in learning opportunities among students. Therefore, addressing these issues is essential for ensuring equitable education.

Teacher competence is a critical factor in the success of English learning in the digital era. Educators must possess the skills and knowledge required to integrate technology into their teaching practices (Mustapha & Kashefian-Naeeni, 2017). They must also be able to guide students in using digital tools effectively. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to implement innovative learning strategies. This highlights the importance of professional development programs for educators (Febriani & Afriani, 2025).

In addition to teacher competence, institutional support plays a vital role in promoting effective English learning. Educational institutions must provide adequate resources, infrastructure, and policies to support digital learning. This includes access to technology, training programs, and curriculum development. Institutional support ensures that both teachers and students can benefit from digital learning environments. Without such support, the implementation of innovative strategies may be limited (Fajriantini & Mayasari, 2025).

Motivation is another key factor influencing English learning among Gen Z learners. Digital platforms and interactive media can enhance motivation by making learning more enjoyable and engaging. However, sustaining motivation requires continuous effort from educators. They must create learning environments that are both challenging and rewarding. By doing so, students are more likely to remain engaged in the learning process (Qatrunnada & Setiawan, 2025).

Educational policies also play an important role in supporting English learning in the digital era. Governments and educational

authorities must prioritize the integration of digital literacy and language learning. Policies should focus on improving access to technology and enhancing the quality of education. By aligning educational policies with global trends, countries can better prepare their students for the future. This ensures that learners are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in a globalized world (Hasby et al., 2025).

The urgency of learning English can also be viewed from a socio-cultural perspective. English serves as a medium for cultural exchange and global interaction. By learning English, students can gain a better understanding of different cultures and perspectives. This promotes intercultural awareness and global citizenship. In the digital era, such competencies are increasingly important.

From a conceptual perspective, the integration of English learning and digital transformation forms a comprehensive framework for understanding modern education (Wardi et al., 2025). This framework highlights the interconnectedness of language, technology, and global communication. By considering these factors, educators can develop more effective teaching strategies. This approach provides a holistic understanding of English learning in the digital era.

Another important aspect that emerges from the analysis is the role of autonomous learning in supporting English acquisition among Gen Z. As digital natives, Gen Z learners tend to explore learning resources independently through online platforms such as YouTube, language learning applications, and social media. This behavior reflects a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches, where students take greater responsibility for their own learning process. The availability of diverse digital resources allows learners to personalize their learning experiences according to their interests, proficiency levels, and learning goals. However, this autonomy also requires critical digital literacy skills to ensure that learners can evaluate the credibility and relevance of the information they access (Nahdi et al., 2024).

In addition, the concept of multimodal learning becomes increasingly relevant in the context of English learning for Gen Z. Digital environments provide various forms of input, including text, audio, video, and interactive media, which can enhance comprehension and retention. This multimodal exposure supports

different learning styles and helps learners develop multiple language skills simultaneously. For example, watching videos can improve listening and pronunciation, while engaging with captions and comments can enhance reading and writing skills. Therefore, the integration of multimodal resources is essential in creating a comprehensive and effective language learning environment (Humaida et al., 2026).

The influence of global digital culture also contributes to the urgency of learning English among Gen Z. Through social media and online communities, learners are constantly exposed to global trends, entertainment, and communication practices that are predominantly conducted in English. This exposure not only increases their familiarity with the language but also shapes their identity as global citizens. As a result, English becomes a tool for social interaction and cultural participation, rather than merely an academic subject. This shift in perception further strengthens the motivation of learners to acquire English proficiency in order to remain connected with global communities (Hani et al., 2024)

Moreover, the integration of English learning with 21st-century skills is a critical factor in preparing Gen Z for future challenges. Skills such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication are closely linked to language proficiency and digital competence. English serves as a medium through which these skills can be developed and applied in various contexts. For instance, participating in online discussions, creating digital content, and collaborating on international projects require both language skills and digital literacy. Therefore, English learning should be designed in a way that supports the development of these essential competencies.

The sustainability of English learning in the digital era depends on continuous innovation and adaptation in educational practices. As technology continues to evolve, new tools and platforms will emerge, offering both opportunities and challenges for language learning. Educators must remain responsive to these changes by updating their teaching methods and integrating emerging technologies into the learning process. At the same time, it is important to maintain a balance between technological integration and pedagogical principles to ensure meaningful learning experiences. This dynamic approach will enable Gen Z to develop the language skills and digital

competencies necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing world.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that the urgency of learning English for Gen Z is strongly influenced by the rapid development of digital transformation and globalization. English has evolved into a global lingua franca that dominates communication across digital platforms, academic environments, and professional sectors. As digital natives, Gen Z requires English not only as a means of communication but also as a tool to access information, participate in global networks, and engage with technological advancements. Therefore, English proficiency becomes a fundamental competence that supports their readiness to face the challenges of the 21st century.

Furthermore, the study emphasizes that the characteristics of Gen Z demand innovative and adaptive learning approaches. Traditional teaching methods are no longer sufficient to meet their needs, as they prefer interactive, technology-based, and contextually relevant learning experiences. The integration of digital tools, collaborative learning, and contextual strategies has been shown to enhance student engagement, motivation, and language proficiency. However, challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate teacher competence, and unequal access to technology must be addressed to ensure the effectiveness of English learning in the digital era.

Finally, this study proposes a conceptual framework that highlights the interconnection between English proficiency and digital literacy as essential components of future competencies. The integration of these elements enables Gen Z to actively participate in global communication and adapt to the evolving demands of the digital world. Therefore, it is crucial for educators, institutions, and policymakers to collaborate in designing strategies and policies that support the development of English skills in alignment with digital transformation, ensuring that learners are well-prepared for academic, professional, and social success in a globalized society.

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