

**DEVELOPING MEDIA COMPETENCE IN FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE
TEACHERS THROUGH MODERN DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES**

Urinov Rustambek Yokubjonovich

Teacher Assistant at the Fergana state technical university

Rustamsilver96@mail.ru

+998917763077

Annotation: In an increasingly digital world, media competence has emerged as a crucial skill for educators. This article explores media competence in the context of English language teacher education, emphasizing why future English teachers must be adept with modern digital tools – from artificial intelligence applications to internet-based platforms and social media. We define what media competence entails for English language pedagogy and explain its importance in today's globalized educational environment. The analysis covers contemporary tools such as AI-assisted writing software, multimedia content creation tools, and online collaboration and social networking platforms, examining how they can be leveraged in language teaching. We also discuss practical strategies for enhancing media competence during teacher training, including curriculum integration, hands-on digital projects, and critical media literacy exercises.

Keywords: Media competence; digital literacy; English language teaching; teacher education; artificial intelligence; social media; Uzbekistan

Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving digital world, the ability to navigate technology is essential for academic and professional success. Education systems worldwide are responding by embedding digital literacy and media education into curricula to prepare both students and teachers for the demands of the modern workplace. For English language teaching, this digital shift carries particular significance. English educators and learners have unprecedented access to online resources, multimedia content, and global communication platforms. This creates immense opportunities to enrich language learning through authentic materials and interactive experiences, but it also requires teachers to have the competencies to critically select, evaluate, and integrate these media into their pedagogy.

One key concept in this regard is media competence. Media competence for educators extends beyond basic computer skills; it encompasses the ability to effectively interact with the media environment, utilize information and communication technologies (ICT) in teaching, understand and produce various media forms, and manage information flows in the classroom. In the context of English language pedagogy, a media-competent teacher can confidently incorporate digital videos, audio, online articles, social media content, and AI tools into lessons, while also guiding students in how to critically interpret and create media in English. Developing such competence in future teachers has become a priority in many countries, including Uzbekistan, where educational reforms and policies emphasize modern pedagogical skills and technology integration in language education.

This article examines the multifaceted role of media competence in training future English teachers. We will discuss what media competence entails for language teachers and why it is critically important in today's globalized, information-rich environment. We then analyze modern digital technologies – including AI-assisted tools, internet-based educational platforms, and social media – that can enhance English teaching and learning. Next, we explore practical strategies for teacher education programs to build media competence, ranging from curriculum design to hands-on training activities. The case of the Fergana branch of a technical university in

Uzbekistan is presented to illustrate real-world practices, challenges, and development opportunities in fostering media competence among pre-service English teachers. Finally, we provide concrete pedagogical recommendations and examples that teacher educators and mentors can apply to help future English teachers become confident, media-savvy professionals.

Media competence refers to a teacher's capacity to use, analyze, evaluate, and create media effectively for educational purposes. In English language pedagogy, this means a teacher not only knows how to operate digital devices and software, but also understands how to integrate various media to support language acquisition and critical thinking. A media-competent English teacher can select appropriate authentic materials (such as news articles, podcasts, videos, or social media posts) to develop students' reading, listening, and cultural understanding. Equally important, the teacher can guide students in producing their own content (for example, writing blog posts or recording presentations), thereby practicing language skills in meaningful contexts.

Crucially, media competence involves critical awareness. Teachers must be able to critically evaluate media texts for accuracy, bias, and pedagogical suitability. This includes understanding how the form and content of media can influence learners. As one study notes, media competence means having the ability to effectively interact with the media space – finding effective ways to use IT in the classroom, understanding the meanings of audiovisual messages, and confidently handling information flows. In practice, an English teacher with high media competence might, for instance, analyze a news article or advertisement in class to show students how language and meaning can be shaped by context and media formats. By doing so, the teacher helps students become more critical consumers of information while simultaneously improving their language skills.

Integrating media education into language teaching also aligns with modern competency-based education goals. According to media education specialists, bringing media into lessons encourages independent thinking, creativity, and better information processing in students. In other words, when teachers incorporate media literacy activities into English lessons, they contribute to students' intellectual development and worldviews. Media competence thus is not an isolated skill; it is intertwined with pedagogical competence and language proficiency. English teachers skilled in media use can facilitate richer classroom discussions (for example, debating the credibility of sources or the persuasive language in advertisements) and foster higher order thinking skills in their learners. In summary, media competence in English language pedagogy entails a blend of digital-technical skills, pedagogical knowledge, and critical literacy – all applied to create an engaging and informed language learning experience.

For future English teachers, developing media competence is of paramount importance in today's educational environment. Modern students – often dubbed digital natives – are accustomed to consuming and interacting with information through screens and multimedia. To engage and educate these learners effectively, teachers must be comfortable working with digital content and tools. A teacher lacking media competence may rely solely on traditional textbooks and methods, risking a disconnect with students who find digital content more relevant and motivating. In contrast, a media-competent teacher can bridge the gap between students' digital lives and classroom learning, making English lessons more relatable and effective.

Moreover, media competence is essential for teaching critical thinking and communication skills, which are key outcomes of language education. As the internet provides vast amounts of information (and misinformation), English teachers often serve as guides helping students navigate English-language media. Teachers with strong media literacy can instruct students on how to distinguish reliable sources from false or biased information, an increasingly important skill. For example, in Uzbekistan's schools and universities, teachers are expected to help

students discern accurate information from misleading content online, cultivating a critical mindset. This guidance is only possible if the teachers themselves are adept at evaluating digital content. In short, future English teachers need media competence not just to use technology, but to mentor their students in becoming informed, critical users of English-language media.

The global and globalized context of education further amplifies this need. English is the lingua franca of the internet and international communication; thus, English teachers often introduce learners to global content and cross-cultural perspectives through media. A teacher skilled in using media can connect their classroom to the wider world – for instance, by using international news videos for listening practice or by setting up pen-pal exchanges via social networks. Such activities prepare students for real-world communication and broaden their cultural understanding. Teachers without media competence might miss these opportunities to internationalize and enrich the curriculum.

In summary, media competence is not an optional add-on but a core component of a future English teacher's professional toolkit. It enhances teaching effectiveness, enables critical 21st-century skills, and aligns with both student needs and institutional goals in a digital and globalized educational landscape. The next sections will explore the modern technologies that can support media competence and how teacher education can foster these skills in practical ways.

Modern Digital Tools and Platforms in Language Education

Advances in technology have introduced a plethora of digital tools and platforms that English teachers can leverage to improve instruction and student engagement. Developing media competence involves becoming familiar with these tools and understanding how to use them pedagogically. Below, we analyze several categories of modern digital technologies – including AI-assisted applications, multimedia creation tools, internet-based educational platforms, and social media – and their relevance to English language teaching.

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Language Education:

AI tools are rapidly transforming educational practices. For language teachers, AI-powered applications offer support in tasks ranging from content generation to personalized feedback. For example, AI-assisted writing tools (such as intelligent grammar checkers and writing tutors) can provide instant suggestions to students' writing, helping them improve vocabulary and grammar with less teacher intervention. Likewise, AI chatbots or conversational agents can simulate dialogues for speaking practice. Teachers with media competence learn how to integrate these tools thoughtfully – using them to supplement instruction without replacing the teacher's guidance. Every educator today should become aware of AI and how to leverage it to benefit students and enhance teaching work. When used well, AI tools can enhance creativity and productivity in the classroom, personalize learning by analyzing student performance, and even automate routine tasks like grading quizzes. For instance, an English teacher might use an AI platform to generate a set of vocabulary exercises or reading comprehension questions tailored to a text the class is studying. This not only saves preparation time but also allows instant adaptation of difficulty to match student levels. Embracing AI in this manner requires that teachers understand its capabilities and limitations – an aspect of media competence that is increasingly important. Teachers must also model ethical and responsible use of AI for their students, discussing issues like academic honesty and bias in AI outputs. By actively exploring and experimenting with AI tools during their training, future English teachers can become confident in integrating these emerging technologies into their pedagogical repertoire.

2. Multimedia Content Creation and Use:

Media competence heavily involves the ability to work with multimedia – combining text, images, audio, and video – which is highly relevant for language teaching. Modern English

lessons often include multimedia content: for example, playing a short video clip in English to practice listening skills, or using infographics to teach new vocabulary in context. Beyond using existing materials, teachers can also create their own multimedia teaching aids using various tools. Applications for video editing, podcast recording, animation, and interactive presentation (like PowerPoint with multimedia, or tools such as Canva, Powtoon, etc.) enable even non-technical teachers to produce engaging content. A teacher trainee might learn to create a simple educational video where they narrate a story with pictures, or develop a digital slideshow with embedded audio for a vocabulary lesson. Creating such content not only enriches their future classroom practice but also gives them insight into how media messages are constructed – a key part of media literacy. One particularly powerful method is digital storytelling. Studies have shown that having future teachers design and present digital stories (combining images, narration, and text to tell a story) is an effective way to build their media competence and creativity. By crafting a narrative in English using digital tools, teacher candidates practice language skills and simultaneously learn how multimedia can evoke emotions and convey complex ideas. Another example is the use of media texts (like advertisements, news reports, or YouTube videos) as teaching materials. Analyzing such media in class helps students learn language in context and sharpen their critical thinking. For instance, a lesson might involve examining an English-language advertisement's imagery and wording – through discussing its characters, genre, and message, students not only learn new words but also enhance their media competence and critical thinking skills. A media-competent teacher knows how to select appropriate multimedia resources and design tasks around them (such as comprehension questions, discussions, or creative responses), making lessons more dynamic and effective.

3. Internet-Based Educational Platforms and Online Collaboration:

The internet offers countless platforms and resources that can be harnessed for English language education. Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle, Google Classroom, or Canvas are widely used to organize course content, assignments, and communication. A future English teacher should be comfortable using such platforms to distribute multimedia materials (readings, videos), collect student work, and facilitate discussions. Many LMS also support quizzes and immediate feedback, which can reinforce learning outside of classroom hours. Additionally, abundant open educational resources (OERs) exist online – from free English e-books and grammar tutorials to interactive language games and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses). Media competence involves knowing how to find and evaluate these resources for quality and relevance. For example, a teacher might incorporate an interactive grammar quiz from a reputable website or assign students to watch a short TED Talk related to the course theme, followed by a reflection exercise.

4. Social Media and Informal Learning:

Social media platforms have a dual role in modern education. On one hand, they serve as informal learning environments for students; on the other, they are professional development and networking tools for teachers. For English language learning, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or TikTok can be surprisingly useful. They expose students to authentic English content – real-world language use in posts, comments, videos, and memes – which can complement formal learning. Teachers can leverage this by designing activities that connect with social media content. For instance, an assignment might ask students to follow an English-language news page or educational YouTube channel and then share something they learned. Some teachers have even created class hashtags for students to post short writings (e.g., on Twitter) or have used WhatsApp/Telegram groups to practice conversation skills in English. Of course, using social media in class requires careful planning to ensure student privacy and focus;

media-competent teachers will establish clear guidelines for appropriate use and help students critically evaluate what they encounter online.

Strategies for Enhancing Media Competence in Teacher Training

Given the importance of media competence, teacher education programs must take proactive steps to develop these skills in future English teachers. Below are key strategies and approaches that can be implemented in pre-service teacher training to ensure graduates are prepared for the digital-media challenges of contemporary classrooms:

Integrating Media Literacy into the Curriculum: Media competence should be woven into the fabric of teacher education, not taught as an afterthought. Training institutions can introduce dedicated modules or courses on educational technology and media literacy for language teaching. These courses would cover both technical skills (like using specific tools or platforms) and critical analysis skills (like evaluating digital content and discussing the social impact of media). For example, a course might require trainees to analyze various media texts in English – from news articles to social media posts – and discuss how to use them in teaching.

Hands-On Training and Project-Based Learning: Theory needs to be combined with practice for media competence to truly develop. Teacher training programs should include practical assignments and projects that require the use of digital media. For instance, trainees could be tasked with designing a technology-enhanced lesson plan: choosing an English topic and then integrating at least one digital tool (such as an AI writing assistant, a video clip, or an online quiz) into their lesson design. After implementing these lessons in micro-teaching sessions (simulated classroom exercises with peers), they can reflect on what worked or what challenges arose. Another effective project is requiring trainees to create an original digital teaching resource. This might be a short educational video in English, an interactive slideshow for a grammar topic, or even a simple website or blog that could be used by their future students. Such projects push trainees to become content creators, thereby improving their technical skills and understanding of media design. Research has indicated that engaging trainees in digital storytelling projects or similar creative multimedia tasks can significantly enhance their media competence and pedagogical creativity. By the end of their training, each future teacher could have a portfolio of digital materials they produced, which also boosts their confidence in using media in the classroom.

Critical Media Analysis and Reflection: Developing a critical mindset is a vital part of media competence. Teacher educators should incorporate activities where trainees practice analyzing media messages and reflect on their role as teachers in mediating those messages. One strategy is to use case studies or current events: for example, presenting a controversial piece of media (like a biased news article or a viral social media post) and having trainees discuss how they might address it in a classroom if students bring it up. Trainees can learn techniques to teach critical thinking, such as comparing multiple sources on the same topic or deconstructing an advertisement's language and imagery. In-class workshops can be conducted on topics like "Detecting Fake News in English" or "Analyzing Stereotypes in Media Representations." By engaging with these issues during training, future teachers become more prepared to help their own students navigate media. They learn that analyzing the genre, language, and intent of media texts is an effective way for learners to become critical thinkers about media. Additionally, trainees should reflect on their personal media use and biases. Teacher educators might ask them to do a media diary (tracking and reflecting on the media they consume for a week) or to evaluate the quality of online sources they commonly use. Such reflective practices build the habit of mindful media consumption and usage, which they can model for their students.

Improving Infrastructure and Resource Access: A very practical aspect of developing media competence is ensuring that teacher trainees have access to the necessary technology and

resources during their education. Institutions should invest in up-to-date language labs, computer labs, reliable internet connectivity, and available devices (e.g., a set of tablets or laptops for classroom use). These resources allow trainees to practice with real tools. If possible, training centers should simulate a modern smart classroom environment – for example, equipping rooms with projectors or interactive whiteboards and demonstrating their use in teaching English. Beyond physical infrastructure, access to digital resources is crucial. Universities can provide subscriptions to educational software or language-learning platforms for trainees to explore. In Uzbekistan, for instance, current projects are working on upgrading the digital infrastructure of teacher training centers as part of broader educational reforms. By improving infrastructure, institutions remove one of the major barriers (technical difficulties) that often hinder the practical implementation of media-rich lessons. Trainees who practice in a well-equipped environment are less likely to be intimidated by technology in their future workplaces and more likely to incorporate it seamlessly.

Current Practices: The Fergana branch, being a technical university, inherently places a strong emphasis on technology across its programs. In the realm of English language teaching, this environment provides both advantages and unique contexts. Many students at the branch are engineering or IT majors who must learn technical English; thus, English instructors often incorporate digital content relevant to those fields (for example, using online articles about technology or demonstration videos of engineering concepts in English). Classrooms are increasingly equipped with projectors and internet access, enabling teachers to bring multimedia materials into their lessons. Some English faculty members at the Fergana branch have started to experiment with blended learning, using the university's online platforms to share materials and assignments with students. It's common to see teachers supplement textbooks with online resources, such as English YouTube lectures or interactive quizzes. There is also a growing practice of involving students in media projects – for instance, having students create PowerPoint presentations or short videos on topics related to their majors, which are then presented in English. These practices indicate an awareness of the value of media integration. Furthermore, academic staff at Fergana have engaged in research on media competence in language education. For example, local researchers have published on methodologies for developing media competence in teaching English to technical students, reflecting an intellectual commitment to advancing these pedagogical approaches.

Finally, the student population at the Fergana branch represents an opportunity. The majority of students are already tech-oriented (being in engineering, computer science, etc.), which means they are generally receptive to digital approaches in learning. Future English teachers coming from this environment will have peers who are digital natives, pushing them to keep up and be creative. Many student teachers themselves choose to study at a technical university's branch precisely because they recognize the value of technology. With the right mentorship, these trainees could become champions of media competence, perhaps even training their older colleagues in certain tools. As they transition into teaching roles, they carry with them a mindset open to innovation and continuous learning.

In conclusion, the Fergana branch case exemplifies a transitional stage: a setting with inherent strengths in technology and clear recognition of media competence's importance, yet still working through practical hurdles. Continued investment in infrastructure, targeted training (both initial and ongoing professional development), and fostering a collaborative culture will help this and similar institutions fully realize the goal of having all future English teachers be competent and confident in using media and technology in their practice.

Pedagogical Recommendations and Examples

Building on the analysis above, we propose several concrete pedagogical recommendations for developing media competence among future English language teachers. Each recommendation is accompanied by examples to illustrate how it can be implemented in practice:

Embed Media Literacy in Teaching Practice: Encourage teacher trainees to incorporate media analysis activities into their lesson plans. For example: a trainee might design a lesson where students compare two news headlines on the same event – one from a reputable source and one from a dubious source – and discuss the differences in language and reliability. Such an exercise teaches critical thinking and demonstrates the importance of evaluating media. By routinely embedding tasks that involve analyzing or creating media content, trainees normalize the use of media in teaching. Research suggests that analyzing real-world media (like advertisements or news clips) in class not only improves language skills but also boosts students' media competence and critical thinking. Thus, future teachers should practice leading these analyses, learning how to formulate good guiding questions and facilitate discussions on media content.

Implement Microteaching with Technology Integration: Microteaching is a staple of teacher education, wherein trainees teach a short lesson to their peers for feedback. We recommend explicitly requiring a certain number of microteaching sessions to involve digital media. For instance: one microteaching round could be “teach a 15-minute vocabulary lesson using at least two multimedia elements (e.g., an audio clip and an image slideshow).” Another could be “conduct a segment of a lesson as if it were online – via Zoom or another video platform – with your peers acting as students remotely.” These structured tasks force trainees out of their comfort zone and make them troubleshoot practical issues. In the vocabulary lesson example, a trainee might play an audio recording of different animal sounds for an animal-themed lesson and show pictures; afterwards, their peers might give feedback on whether the media elements were well-chosen and effectively used. In the online teaching simulation, trainees learn things like managing screen sharing, watching the chat for questions, or keeping students engaged when not physically present. Feedback from instructors and peers would cover both teaching technique and technical execution (e.g., was the text on the slides readable? was the pace of the video appropriate?). Through multiple iterations, future teachers refine both sets of skills together. This kind of integrated practice ensures that by the time they face a real classroom, using an interactive whiteboard or switching to an online session in an emergency will feel much more natural to them.

Encourage Participation in Professional Learning Networks: As a final recommendation, teacher educators should motivate trainees to join at least one professional online community or network during their studies. For example: a methodologist could assign trainees to explore a platform like TeachingEnglish (by the British Council) or a social media group like “ESL Teachers Exchange” on Facebook, and then write a reflection on what they learned or contributed there. Alternatively, trainees might follow an education-focused webinar or YouTube channel and discuss new ideas they discovered. The purpose of these activities is to show future teachers that learning doesn't stop at graduation – there's a wealth of knowledge continually shared by educators worldwide through media. By actively engaging in such networks even as trainees, they start building connections and habits of continuous improvement. One concrete outcome could be a trainee discovering a new app or activity idea from a teacher in another country and then trying it in their practicum. Sharing that experience back in the university seminar closes the loop, reinforcing a culture of knowledge exchange. In essence, this recommendation harnesses social media and the internet as a means of ongoing professional development. Teachers who have learned how to utilize these networks are more likely to remain current with emerging technologies and methodologies, sustaining their media competence throughout their career.

By implementing these recommendations, teacher education programs can produce graduates who are not only aware of modern digital technologies and media in theory, but can also apply them confidently and wisely in their teaching. Each suggested practice contributes to building a well-rounded media competence: technical skill, pedagogical integration, critical perspective, and an ethos of continuous learning. Future English language teachers trained in this way will be better equipped to create vibrant, media-rich learning environments that resonate with the digital generation of students.

Conclusion

The development of media competence among future English language teachers is a vital imperative in the 21st-century educational landscape. As we have discussed, media competence in English pedagogy encompasses the ability to effectively use digital tools, critically engage with media content, and integrate multimedia resources to enhance language teaching and learning. It is driven by the realities of a globalized, technology-saturated world where English educators must prepare students to navigate information critically and communicate across diverse media.

In conclusion, developing media competence is essential for future English language teachers to thrive in the modern educational arena. Teachers who are media-competent will be better communicators, more innovative instructors, and more adept mentors for their students' digital literacy. They will be able to harness technology to create richer language learning experiences and also guide learners in becoming critical users of English-language media. For countries like Uzbekistan, which are rapidly modernizing their education systems and emphasizing English proficiency, investing in the media competence of new teachers is an investment in quality and future readiness of education. As technology continues to evolve – with AI, virtual reality, and other emerging tools entering classrooms – the concept of media competence will also evolve, encompassing new literacies and pedagogies. Therefore, teacher education must remain dynamic, continually updating its approaches to ensure that teachers remain lifelong learners alongside their students. By fostering a strong foundation in media competence now, we empower the next generation of English teachers to confidently lead tech-enhanced, media-rich classrooms that prepare students for the complexities of the digital world.

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