

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the present study. It begins by outlining the background and rationale for examining multiliteracy competence among pre-service English language teachers, followed by the research questions and objectives that guide the study. The chapter then defines the scope and limitations of the research, discusses its theoretical and practical significance, and situates the study within the existing body of literature to highlight its novelty.

1.1 Background of the Study

Multiliteracies, as introduced by the New London Group (1996), is defined as the process of designing meaning across linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, and spatial modes in response to cultural diversity and technological change. This framework was further developed by Cope and Kalantzis (2009, 2015) into a pedagogy that stresses four knowledge processes: experiencing, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying. In English language teacher education, multiliteracy competence refers to pre-service teachers' ability to use these modes to plan, deliver, and evaluate instruction in digital and multicultural settings.

Recent empirical work shows that pre-service English teachers often report moderate to low competence in these areas. For example, Nabhan and Habók (2025) developed and validated the Teacher Multiliteracies Scale (TMS) with Indonesian pre-service English teachers and found reliable measurement across four dimensions: digital, multimodal, critical, and sociocultural literacy. Their

validation study, based on responses from teacher education programs in Indonesia, indicated that current assessment tools previously focused on single literacies and did not capture the integrated nature required for English teaching. Similarly, Andriyati et al. (2025) surveyed pre-service teachers across disciplines in Indonesia and reported differences in multiliteracy knowledge and pedagogical readiness, with language-related programs showing slightly higher preparedness for multimodal instruction than non-language programs, though overall implementation challenges persisted due to digital access disparities and curriculum gaps.

This sense of unpreparedness is not merely theoretical. The researcher's own experience during the Praktik Keterampilan Mengajar (PKM), the supervised teaching practicum at Universitas Negeri Jakarta provided a direct, firsthand encounter with these multiliteracy gaps. During the practicum, it became evident that designing instruction that integrates multiple modes of communication, particularly those addressing cultural and social diversity in language use, was significantly more challenging than anticipated. Discussions with peers from the same cohort confirmed that this experience was widely shared: fellow BELE students reported feeling that their undergraduate preparation had disproportionately emphasized digital literacy skills such as using presentation tools and online resources while leaving them considerably less equipped in sociocultural literacy. Specifically, many felt underprepared to adapt instruction to the diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural realities of their students, or to critically engage with culturally embedded texts and ideologies present in English learning materials. This practical gap aligns with the broader finding that pre-

service teachers in Indonesia receive limited systematic multiliteracy training (Nabhan & Habók, 2025; Andriyati et al., 2025), and it motivated the present researcher to investigate these competence patterns more rigorously and systematically within the BELE program at UNJ.

These findings point to a specific problem: pre-service English language teachers in contexts like Indonesia receive limited systematic training in multiliteracies, which affects their readiness to design lessons that integrate multiple modes and address learner diversity (Nabhan & Habók, 2025; Andriyati et al., 2025). This matters because English classrooms increasingly involve digital texts, social media, and culturally varied students, and teachers without these competencies may struggle to promote equitable participation (OECD, 2018; Huot et al., 2025).

Existing research provides global frameworks but offers few localized, validated measures for English teacher education in developing countries. Nabhan and Habók (2025) addressed this by creating the TMS specifically for pre-service English teachers, yet its application remains limited beyond initial validation. Andriyati et al. (2025) extended the discussion to cross-disciplinary comparisons but did not focus exclusively on English education programs. The present study fills this gap by applying the TMS in a single English Language Education Department at Universitas Negeri Jakarta to describe competence levels, dimension-specific strengths and weaknesses, and patterns by semester level. Conducting this research was particularly important because it generated the first empirical baseline data for the BELE program at UNJ, where multiliteracies training had never been systematically assessed. The findings can directly inform curriculum revisions at

the department level, help address local challenges such as unequal digital access among students, and provide evidence-based recommendations for national policies on 21st-century teacher competencies in Indonesia (Kementerian Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia [Kemdikbud], 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

1.2 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of multiliteracy competence among BELE students?
2. Which dimensions of multiliteracy competence are more or less developed among BELE students?
3. To what extent do multiliteracy competencies vary across semester levels, and what systematic patterns can be identified when these competencies are examined?

The term level in Research Question 1 refers to the categorical classification of mean competence scores used to interpret the quantitative results of this study (e.g., Low, Moderately Low, Moderately High, High). This classification is adapted from the score-interpretation approach used in the validation of the Teacher Multiliteracies Scale (TMS) by Nabhan and Habók (2025) and is applied to the four-point Likert scale employed in this research, as detailed in Section 3.6.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study aims:

1. To examine the overall level of multiliteracy competence among Bachelor of English Language Education (BELE) students.
2. To determine the development of each dimension of multiliteracy competence among Bachelor of English Language Education (BELE) students.
3. To describe observable patterns in multiliteracy competence based on selected background variables.

1.4 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study focuses on the multiliteracy competence of pre-service English language teachers enrolled in an English Language Education program. Two limitations of this design should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a single English Language Education department at one university in Jakarta rather than across multiple regions or institutions. Because access to digital infrastructure, curriculum emphasis, and cultural context can vary considerably across Indonesian regions and institutions (Kemdikbud, 2022), the resulting competence profile reflects the specific conditions of this department, and the findings should not be directly generalized to pre-service teachers in other regions or institutions without further comparative research. Second, the design is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal: data were collected from four different semester cohorts at a single point in time rather than by tracking the same group of students as they progressed through the program. Consequently, the semester-based patterns

reported in Chapter 4 should be interpreted as differences between cohorts rather than as confirmed evidence of individual developmental change over time, since cross-sectional comparisons of this kind can also reflect cohort-specific characteristics unrelated to time spent in the program (Cohen et al., 2018). As a result, the study does not examine classroom practices or track the longitudinal development of multiliteracy competence within individual students. The findings are context-specific and may not be generalized beyond similar teacher education settings.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on multiliteracies by providing empirical evidence of multiliteracy competence among pre-service English language teachers, extending the multiliteracies framework (Cope & Kalantzis, 2015) and the recently validated Teacher Multiliteracies Scale (Nabhan & Habók, 2025) to a single, institution-specific context. Practically, the findings may inform teacher educators and curriculum developers about areas of strength and weakness in current teacher preparation programs, particularly in relation to digital and multimodal literacies, in line with calls for context-specific evidence to guide curriculum development in Indonesian teacher education (Andriyati et al., 2025). The results may also serve as a reference for future research on multiliteracy competence in teacher education contexts, including comparative studies across institutions and cohorts (Zapata et al., 2023).

1.6 State of the Art and Novelty

Research on multiliteracies in teacher education has progressed from foundational theory (New London Group, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2009, 2015) to the development of validated instruments and context-specific applications. Nabhan and Habók (2025) created the Teacher Multiliteracies Scale (TMS) and reported excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha values of 0.954–0.980 across dimensions) through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis with Indonesian pre-service English teachers. Andriyati et al. (2025) conducted a cross-disciplinary survey across Indonesian teacher education programs and found that students in language-focused programs reported significantly higher multimodal preparedness than those in non-language programs; however, implementation barriers related to digital infrastructure and curriculum integration remained consistent across all groups.

Furthermore, global studies have increasingly incorporated digital and AI influences into multiliteracies research, such as Kalantzis and Cope (2025a), who examined how artificial intelligence reshapes literacy practices, emphasizing the need for teachers to critically evaluate AI-generated content. In Indonesian contexts, this integration is emerging but limited, with works like Prayogo (2024) linking everyday multimodal literacies to professional development, yet lacking institution-specific applications of tools like the TMS.

Recent studies have also examined practical pedagogical integration, such as the use of multimodal projects during teaching practicum to strengthen professional identity (Maia, 2022) and project-based multiliteracies approaches that significantly improved sociocultural awareness among pre-service teachers

(Castro-Garcés, 2021). Despite these contributions, there is still a lack of descriptive profiling studies that apply a validated instrument such as the TMS to examine competence levels and developmental patterns (by semester) within one specific English Language Education department. This study extends previous work by providing such a focused, institution-specific analysis at Universitas Negeri Jakarta.

