

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

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During this age of technology and digital advancements the realm of teaching languages has seen a notable evolution. Old school teaching techniques centered around memorization, grammar exercises and textbook focused lessons are now making room for resources that promote interaction, ease of access and personalized learning experiences. As stated by Godwin Jones (2018) online platforms empower learners to customize their learning journeys and receive feedback resulting in motivation and academic achievement.

A significant advancement, in this evolution is the emergence of intelligence (AI) and apps in the realm of language education. Incorporating features like speech recognition technology and gamified exercises into platforms such as Duolingo and Busuu has personalized learning experiences for users. The adaptive algorithms within these tools cater to learning speeds and levels of proficiency. This shift has transformed language learning, into an self directed journey. According to Zawodniak (2020) these tools promote learning by offering feedback tailored to different learning preferences [21].

Besides AI, applications such as Quizlet and Kahoot have also become hot cakes in the education system that aids in vocabulary acquisition, assessment, and student engagement. These tools embrace interactive, game-based elements to keep students motivated while also reporting back to teachers on who's proceeding as expected and who might need an extra hand. While digital platforms offer instant correction and data driven insights, they often miss the scale of empathetic response and adaptive encouragement that human educators supply as a matter of course. According to Smith (2021) while the advantages of AI cannot be disregarded, the cognitive skills and emotional intelligence exercised by teachers to address the affective needs of students cannot be achieved by AI [19, 28].

Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual classrooms demonstrate another significant innovation. Now educators can offer synchronous and asynchronous lessons, collaborative activities, and resource sharing through Zoom, Google Classroom, and Microsoft Teams [9, 18]. These environments are advantageous to learners and educators as they remove geographical and time limitations in learning and teaching as well. According to the findings of Wang and Tahir (2020), access to learning opportunities was virtually enhanced during disruptive periods with the use of virtual classrooms, but adequate digital infrastructure and trained teachers were also essential.

Even with the technology's benefits, its implementation tends to have challenges. In developing nations, internet access coupled with the country's technological development still serve as hurdles in a country's digital advancement (UNESCO, 2021). Moreover, the integration of technology within the classroom is reliant on the instructors' digital competencies and their openness towards different ways of teaching. The technology training gap and the application of the technology to the classroom will continue to grow without proper training and adequate resources. Erarslan (2020) puts forth that the digital competence of educators is pivotal for the enduring integration of modern policies and strategies [11, 26].

The adoption of blended learning - a combination of traditional and digital methods - seems to be the future of foreign language teaching. This method allows learners to take advantage of the social and emotional aspects of the classroom alongside the personalization and flexibility available through digital means [4, 29]. Teachers must have, at a minimum, basic digital skills and educational competencies to take full advantage of technological advancements. With the ongoing development of educational technology, technology will increasingly serve as the core of integrating modern and inclusive elements into effective language teaching and learning environments [1, 20].

Comparing digital and traditional teaching methods, one can identify important advantages and drawbacks specific to each category. In contrast to digital approaches, traditional classrooms allow for the provision of face-to-face emotional support and dynamic social engagement during lessons. Digital approaches offer greater flexibility, self-paced study, and 24/7 availability of authentic materials and interaction with native speakers. To demonstrate, a classroom teacher can offer nuanced guidance as learners engage in oral practice, but platforms like Duolingo enable learners to repeat pronunciation tasks ad infinitum without judgment or fatigue at their own pace. The challenge then becomes not choosing one option over the other, but instead seamlessly blending both approaches to create a harmonious learner experience [10,24].

In conclusion, the integration of digital technologies into foreign language teaching has the potential to revolutionize education when applied thoughtfully and inclusively. Digital tools such as AI-powered applications, mobile-based platforms, and virtual classrooms are not only reshaping how languages are taught, but also redefining the roles of teachers and learners in the educational process. The future of language education depends on addressing the digital divide, supporting teacher training, and embracing blended methodologies that combine the best of traditional and digital instruction. By doing so, educators can build more engaging, effective, and equitable learning environments for students in an increasingly connected and globalized world.

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