

The Why and How of Using Digital Technologies for Integrating Culture in the EFL Context: Between Necessity and Difficulty Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract ;(not more than 10 Lines)	Article info
<i>Culture is all-over, touching almost every part of our communications. Yet most teachers lag far behind when it comes to integrating culture using digital technologies. With this concern, the present study examines the importance of inculcating culture in the classroom at different levels. In addition, the present paper highlights how culture can be integrated and how language-learning system can benefit from it. In doing so, 50 teachers from Batna 2 University –Department of English -- have been selected randomly to complete an online questionnaire. The findings show that effectiveness of teaching culture is at limited level and there are problems encountered in culture integration in which most of teachers are not ready and well-equipped in terms of technology integration competencies although they showed positive attitude to use technology for teaching foreign cultures</i>	Received 27/11/2024 Accepted 22/05/2025 Keyword: : ✓ digital technologies: ✓ inculcating culture: ✓ language-learning system

1.

ntroduction

Digital Technologies seems to be a turning point in many sectors of life and teaching. The use of digital technologies is a crucial part of foreign language learning and culture teaching, and it has remarkably changed methods and ways of learning and teaching especially in Algerian universities. Digital Technologies during the corona virus (COVID 19) pandemic has progressed to become an integral part of the education system. Universities in Algeria are intensely utilizing the digital technologies curriculum to boost in person learning.

The integration of digital technologies in culture teaching can create a more purposeful learning environment. The convenient use of digital technologies in teaching the foreign culture can help teachers to develop their students' performance, and motivate students to learn and support them for interactive and collaborative learning.

2. Literature Review***2.1 Digital Technologies: definition and characteristics***

Digital Technologies is a general concept, which means all communication technologies, including the internet,

I hardware and software devices, cell phones, computers, software, middleware, video-conferencing, and social networking. The term digital technologies is being used greatly in education and learning. It is considered a powerful tool for educational change and reinstruction. Kent and Facer (2004) stated that school is an essential place where students can use a set of computer activities.

The use of digital technologies a comprehensive process. This process is influenced by a variety of factors related to the student, the teacher, the tool. Thorough knowledge of these factors will prove very helpful for the teachers and students in the appropriate use of such tools. There are mainly internal and external factors that influence their use. A number of external factors have been recognized. These include technology availability, accessibility of technological tools, and technical and administrative support. Several internal factors also influence technology integration outcomes (Sang et al. 2011).

2.2 Culture teaching and learning: definition and the current situation

It is believed that language is the way through which culture is taught, and the meaning of each word can be realized only when we relate this word to

its social and cultural context. Brown (2007, p. 380) defines culture simply as, “the ideas, customs, skills, arts and tools that characterize a given group in a given period of time”. Culture is about people’s daily life activities including behaving, eating, and talking,

Since culture understanding in foreign language learning is difficult even for native speakers, developing that awareness is a serious task that requires great work, motivation, consistency, and innovative strategies. For that reason, teachers have to find new ways to motivate students and help them improve their cultural awareness; they should change the materials that are used in the explaining of the lessons; the use of digital technologies in enhancing students’ cultural awareness EFL classes created an active area of study among teachers.

Despite the large amount of research that has been done on digital technologies integration, there are still many questions that remain about how it can best be used to aid in student learning particularly their cultural awareness. It is supposed that in classes with digital technologies integration students perform better and interact successively from those students in classes with no digital technologies use. Therefore, the present study sheds light on the role of digital technologies

integration in teaching culture by attempting to answer the following questions:

- To what extent digital technologies integration can help in improving students’ cultural awareness.
- What are teachers’ difficulties towards the integration of digital technologies as a supplementary learning tool in EFL classes?

3. Method and Tools

3.1 Participants

According to (Dörnyei 2007, p. 96), “Two issues to take into consideration when conducting qualitative research are how many participants are needed and what kind of participants are needed”. A sample of 50 university female and male teachers of English in Batna 2 university-Algeria took part in the present study. They were all working in university in Batna 2. The rationale for choosing Batna 2 University is based on the accessibility of recruiting participants as the researcher herself works in the same place. All participants agreed to take part in the study on a voluntary basis. The 50 teachers were chosen randomly to meet the aims of the current study. All teachers were Algerian Native-Arabic speakers

3.2 Instrument and Data Analysis

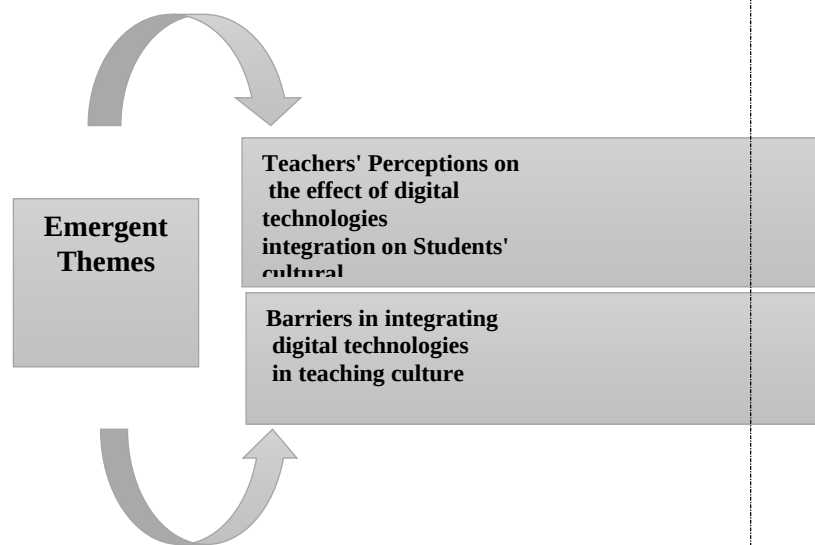
For the present study, the researcher used an online questionnaire to investigate the perceptions of teachers toward digital technologies integration in the classroom. The instrument contained a mixed of open questions and closed questions.

The improvement of the online questionnaire was based on literature on culture teaching. As piloting examines the validity and reliability of the items, the questionnaire was piloted with six teachers from the English department of Batna 2 University, taking into account their comments, some items were changed and others omitted to make it readable.

4. Results and Discussion

Results are categorized on two themes, which were identified in the data of the present study and presented as main challenges, prospects and problems regarding the integration of digital technologies. The themes are presented as:

Figure 1. Emergent themes according to questionnaire analysis



- ***Teachers' Perceptions on the effect of digital technologies integration on Students' cultural awareness***

Students' motivation in learning, insufficient time and teachers' malpractices are shown to be closely associated with teachers' attitudes and response regarding the integration of digital technologies. According to one teacher, "I think a lot of time will be wasted when teachers use digital technologies as they cannot provide effective and continuous assistance and feedback to their students" another respondent. Similarly pointed out that "if you give your students homework assignment, you cannot control their answers. They will use any source to get the right answer. There are numerous ways for students to cheat in online environment".

“Students are always motivated when it comes to computer use class but become withdrawn and sleepy during traditional class” it is the common response by all of the respondents regarding the benefits of using digital technologies tools. Some teachers stated, “Integrating digital technologies encourage my students to be creative and learn in an enjoyable setting”.

In agreement with the first teacher, all teachers raised the idea that students of the present generation are friends with digital technologies tools, and they are using it in all their activities. As Sweeny (2010) put, it is proposed that if students master all those digital technologies tools in their daily life, it would help them if the digital technologies tools were integrated in the teaching of culture as well.

Regarding teaching experiences and age myriad researches highlighted the idea that teaching experiences and age affect the successful integration of digital technologies in classrooms (Giordano, 2007). Accordingly, some teachers stated respectfully “I am too old to integrate those tools, and I am satisfied with my own teaching method” “I believe in traditional method which help me to interact actively with my students”.

- **Barriers in integrating digital technologies in teaching culture**

When the teachers were asked to give their responses on their negative attitudes concerning the use of digital technologies in their teaching practices, a set of factors, which influence teachers’ decisions to use digital technologies in the classroom. Most of them was worried about teachers’ hesitancy in integrating digital technologies “Teachers do not use technological tools, because they are not properly trained or work shopped”. In the same way, they stated that “Lack of digital technologies knowledge and experience is my problem; I am not confident to integrate digital technologies tools”. Myriad studies support the idea that the efficient integration of technology is reliant on the teachers’ ICT skills as well as their attitudes towards ICT incorporation.

Lack of teacher training was one of the focal challenges stated by teachers. This was supported by the results as it was indicated by most of teachers saying, “I did not get any training or lessons regarding the way of using ICT in teaching”. Integrating ICT tools in teaching culture usually includes sufficient time to prepare lessons in the learning process. According to Jones (2001), the lesson preparation using ICT is time consuming.

4. CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of teachers' questionnaire, it is revealed that various challenges are largely facing teachers in teaching writing through digital technologies integration, therefore; the achieved results seem, to confirm some answers to the research questions. The use of technology is becoming increasingly more common, and the effective use of it is important. Teachers' reluctance is a main challenge for digital technologies integration; the perceptions of teachers towards technology largely effect their decision to adapt it in their teaching practices.

Training, motivation and managing time for teachers are mandatory in order to facilitate options for them to integrate digital technologies into their teaching classrooms. The university with all its members has an essential role in minimizing teachers' burden by structuring the administrative tasks and teachers' tasks. Teachers should know that students' of the current generation are familiar with technology, for they should realize this information and should be more advanced than the students to meet their expectations.

The discussion about the integration of digital technologies tools in teaching culture is still ongoing, the majority of teachers felt overwhelmed by technology use. As findings pose several

disadvantages, the present research provides unfavorable support of integrating digital technologies to teach culture. Nevertheless, further investigation is necessary to determine whether digital technologies succeed to replace traditional methods of teaching culture.

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