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INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF ELURU DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology in recent decades has affected almost all sectors of human life, including the field of education. Digital technology in education refers to the use of technological devices such as computers, tablets, the internet, and online applications to support the teaching-learning process. In the context of English Language Learning at secondary school level, the use of digital technology is considered an effective means to improve students' language skills. Despite several research studies showing positive impact of digital technology in English language learning, its implementation in secondary schools still faces a number of challenges. Limited access to technology, lack of facilities in rural schools, unpreparedness for the use of digital tools in the classroom, low levels of teachers' digital skills are some of the inhibiting factors that are often encountered in teaching English in the secondary schools. Teachers' beliefs towards the use of digital tools and their active involvement in the use of technology would certainly improve the quality of English Language Teaching (ELT) in secondary schools. The present study is an attempt to study the teachers' attitude towards integration of digital technology in ELT at secondary level. The researchers used a well-developed and standardized questionnaire as the tool for collection of data from a sample of 140 teachers (70 Headmasters and 70 School Assistants in English) from 70 selected secondary schools located in the Eluru district of Andhra Pradesh using Stratified Random Sampling technique. Mean score values, standard deviations and independent t-tests were used for data analysis. The findings of the study revealed that the demographic variables – 'Gender' and 'Designation' have no influence on the perceptions of teachers towards the use of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level. However, 'location of the institution' has a significant positive influence on their attitude towards the integration of digital technology in teaching English. The study recommended that the Government should organize Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) for the benefit of English teachers towards integration of digital technology in ELT.

Key Words: Attitude, Digital Technology, Secondary School Teachers, English Language Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

English is a widely spoken language in India today. It acts as an indispensable 'link' language due to the cultural and linguistic diversity of people within our country. Since English language is used extensively by people across the globe, it is called the 'global language'. 'English language education' refers to the process and practice of teaching and learning English as a second or foreign language. It encompasses various methods and approaches aimed at developing learners' proficiency in English, including their ability to read, write, speak and understand the language. While reflecting on the scenario of English language teaching in Indian schools, **Meganathan (2013)** observed certain constraints and obstacles faced by English teachers in the teaching of English in secondary schools in terms of curriculum design, materials development, Pedagogical practices in English and the dominant role of English over the Indian languages. According to **Kidwai (2016)**, language

remains a serious academic, pedagogical and policy concern in school education. The use of English is inevitable while teaching subjects like medicine, engineering and technology, education, law, agriculture etc. Hence, it is the need of the hour to improve quality in English language teaching in secondary schools integrating digital technology in classroom teaching.

THE CONCEPT OF 'DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY'

'Digital technology' refers to the use of various technological tools, devices, resources and platforms to enhance and facilitate the learning process. It involves the application of technology, such as computers, tablets, smart phones, software applications, online platforms and the internet in educational settings to improve teaching methods, student engagement and overall learning outcomes in teaching different school subjects. The use of multimedia and other computer assisted devices also serve as resources to transform normal classes into digital classrooms in the context of techno-revolution taking place in different countries across the globe.

ROLE OF 'DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY' IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

The term, 'digital technology' is often used to describe the kind of technology that encompasses the use of a wide range of electronic gadgets. Digital technologies are defined as those that use different kinds of software and hardware to create, store, deliver and display information **(Rice, 2003).** Digitals tools in English Language Teaching are the programs and electronic equipment designed to develop English language learning skills among students, allowing student engagement and interaction in the teaching-learning process. These tools transform traditional classrooms into interactive, engaging and flexible environments in order to provide the students concrete understanding of different aspects in English language learning with their active participation and involvement.

'Integration of Digital Technology' in teaching is an opportunity for teachers to differentiate instruction and to modify information for the appropriate learning capabilities of their students. The use of technology can also allow students to work at their own pace. The following are some of the digital tools that can effectively be used in the English classroom for making the students acquire better the skills of English language learning.

(i) Padlet

Padlet is a versatile tool for creating interactive boards where students can post notes, images and links. It is very useful for collaborative activities and brainstorming sessions.

(ii) Mentimeter

Mentimeter allows teachers to create interactive presentations with real-time quizzes and word clouds. It is an excellent device for engaging students in different activities in the classroom and make them interact with the teacher. It also provides instant feedback.

(iii) Kahoot!

Kahoot! is a Norwegian online game-based learning platform. It is popular for its learning games known as 'kahoots'. They are user-generated multiple choice trivia quizzes that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot! app in minutes. It is a fantastic way to review material and keep students engaged in the classroom.

(iv) Quizlet

Quizlet helps students learn vocabulary through flashcards and various interactive games. It is very useful for developing language learning skills among the students. It also helps in the process of memorization.

(v) Google classroom

Google classroom is a comprehensive platform for managing assignments, sharing resources and communicating with students. It integrates well with other Google tools such as Docs, Slides and Drive.

(vi) Flipgrid

Flipgrid is a video discussion platform where students can record and share short videos. It is very useful for practicing speaking skills and fostering a sense of community.

(vii) Duolingo

Duolingo is an app that offers gamified language learning. It is a fun way for students to practice their English skills outside the classroom.

(viii) Edmodo

Edmodo is a social learning platform that connects teachers and students. It is very useful for sharing resources, assignments and providing feedback.

The above tools can help create a more interactive and engaging learning environment, making language learning more effective and enjoyable.

REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

A review of the related studies carried out in the field by the earlier researchers has been conducted; and a brief summary of the studies is provided in the following paragraphs.

Mufida Ali Ghwela (2023) conducted a study to investigate the English language teachers' perceptions towards the use of technology in English language teaching. The study followed a mixed method research design, in which a questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data as the main research tool, while a semi-structured interview provided the qualitative data. Data were collected from 26 EFL lecturers at Al-Asmarya Islamic University in Zliten, Libya. The collected quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel software, while the qualitative data were categorized into themes. The analysis of data seems to indicate that the main challenges faced by EFL lecturers at Al-Asmarya Islamic University in Zliten in teaching with regard to the use of technology are the lack of internet connection, computers, technical assistance; and lack of teachers with sufficient competence and experience to use technology. It was also found that teachers in higher education have a positive perception towards the use of technology in teaching. The finding asserts that the EFL curriculum in Libyan universities needs to consider incorporating technology into teaching instruction in order to achieve the objective of the teaching and learning process**.**

Ujas Pandya & Paresh Joshi (2022), in a paper on 'Integration of Technology in English Language Teaching' at a National Seminar organized commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Tamansiswa, explains the use of technology in language classrooms, examines the importance of multimedia technology to English language instruction, and identifies the challenges associated with implementing these technologies.

With the rapid development of science and technology, multimedia technology and its application to teaching, featuring audio, visual, and animation effects, comes into full play in English class teaching, setting a favorable platform for reform and exploration of the English teaching model in the new era. Language learning software might help students generate and visualize ideas, organize material systematically, and do other tasks. Spell-checking software examines everything that pupils input, making it simple to discover and correct problems fast. Blogs allow students to produce more expressive personal writing and to engage in peer criticism while modifying shared versions of written work. All accessible software solutions may be utilized successfully to enhance pupils' writing abilities. It is suggested that

multimedia technology may be utilized effectively in ELT classes with sufficient computer skills, overcoming financing challenges in setting up the infrastructure, and preventing instructors from becoming technophobes.

Tamilarasan, P. et al. (2019) conducted an analytical study on Integrating Technology into English Language Teaching. The study revealed that with technological developments, there will be further development in multimedia technology in English teaching. Student-centric teaching methods will be more prominent and consume less time. The study also revealed that the multimedia technology implementation in English teaching can improve students' language skills and ideation; and can ensure effective results in teaching and learning of English. There are certain problems that come with multimedia technology, but they can be overcome for effective solutions and the computer competency and knowledge of the teachers, overcoming financial issues for infrastructure setup, and prevention of teachers becoming technophobes.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT INVESTIGATION

In the current world of Technology, emerging digital trends are transforming language teaching approaches; digital tools have become essential components of contemporary pedagogical frameworks, facilitating the adoption of innovative strategies in English language instruction. It was highlighted by **Son (2007)** that the effective application of digital technology is a central focus in language pedagogy, particularly within the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Technology has significantly amplified access to a diverse range of resources. Technology offers valid linguistic input; and helps to foster communication between English language learners and both L1 and L2 speakers across the globe **(Stockwell, 2013).** Technology has been recognized as a pivotal catalyst in boosting learner motivation and sparking greater engagement in second language acquisition. **Kessler (2018)** asserted that contemporary language educators have a diverse array of innovative technological resources to enrich the language learning process. In order to equip learners with the technological expertise demanded by the modern world, embedding technology into language instruction is not just beneficial it is indispensable.

In this context, it is felt by the researchers to explore the attitude of teachers towards the integration of digital technology in ELT in secondary schools with reference to the demographic variables, viz., gender, designation and location of the institution. The present investigation is an attempt in this direction.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the present study is to explore the attitude of teachers towards the integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

The study also aims at finding out the influence of certain demographic variables –gender, designation and location of the institution on the attitude of teachers towards integration of digital technology in ELT at secondary level.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

The following hypotheses have been formulated for the present investigation:

(i) There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

(ii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of Headmasters and School Assistants in English towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

(iii) There is no significant difference in the attitude of rural and urban teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is limited to find out the influence of three demographic variables, viz., gender, designation and location of the institution on the attitude of teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to explore the attitude of 140 teachers (70 Headmasters and 70 School Assistants in English) from 70 selected secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Eluru district of Andhra Pradesh.

METHODOLOGY

(a) Method of Research

Since the present investigation is a survey type of research, the investigators used '**Descriptive Survey' method** for the present investigation.

(b) Sample

The sample of the present investigation consists of 140 teachers (70 Headmasters and 70 School Assistants in English) working in 70 selected secondary schools located in the rural as well as urban areas in Eluru District of Andhra Pradesh. 'Stratified Random Sampling' method is used to select the sample from the population. In this method, in addition to randomness, stratification introduces a secondary element of control as a means of increasing precision and representativeness.

(c) Research Tool

The researchers used a well-developed questionnaire consisting of 33 items as the tool of research for the present investigation under pilot study. The researchers have verified whether the tool prepared is in conformity with the conditions required by a standard tool. The researchers have conducted item analysis for purpose of standardization of the research tool.

(d) Administration of the Tool

The tool was initially administered to 30 teachers (15 Headmasters and 15 School Assistants in English) working in 15 (fifteen) secondary schools in Eluru district under Pilot study. The measures of reliability, validity and objectivity of the tool have been calculated. Further, the researchers conducted item analysis for the items included in the tool. Out of 33 items selected for the tool, the discriminating power of 30 items has been found positive and is negative in respect of 3 items. The items whose discriminating power is negative have been removed; and the final tool consists of 30 items, which are pool proof in all respects. The final tool has been administered to 140 teachers (70 Headmasters and 70 School Assistants in English) working in 70 selected secondary schools located in Eluru District of Andhra Pradesh.

STATISTICAL INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The duly filled-in questionnaires have been collected from 140 respondents – both the Headmasters and the School Assistants in English working in the 70 selected secondary schools for purpose of tabulation of data.

The data collected has been analyzed and interpreted using different statistical techniques such as Mean scores, Standard Deviations and t-ratios; and are presented in the following table.

Table showing t-values of different variables relating to the attitude of teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level

S. No.	Variable		N	Mean	S.D.	t-ratio	Result
1	Gender	Male Female	60 80	102.83 101.00	24.52 27.01	0.42*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and0.01 levels
2	Designation	Headmaster School Asst.(Eng.)	70 70	103.93 101.93	25.06 28.35	0.36*	*Not Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels
3	Location of the institution	Rural Urban	90 50	88.72 105.30	25.63 22.47	3.98*	*Significant at 0.05 and 0.01 levels

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

On the basis of the analysis and interpretation of data, the researchers have arrived at the following findings and drawn the conclusions.

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of male and female teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of Headmasters and School Assistants in English towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.
3. There is significant difference in the attitude of teachers working in rural and urban schools towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level.

   Teachers working in urban schools exhibited higher level of attitude towards integration of digital technology in teaching English at secondary level as compared to their counterparts working in rural schools.

CONCLUSION

From the findings of the study, it is concluded that Gender and Designation have no influence on the attitude of teachers towards integration of digital technology in teaching English in secondary schools. However, Location of the school has a significant positive influence on their attitude towards integration of digital technology in teaching English, with urban teachers showing better attitude towards integration of digital technology in ELT as compared to their rural counterparts.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

(i) The present study helps teachers of English realize the importance of integrating digital technology in teaching English in secondary schools.

(ii) The study helps teachers understand the benefits of using technology in ELT over the traditional and outdated methods in ELT in secondary schoolsl.

(iii) The study would help teachers in motivating their students in learning English effectively with the integration of digital technology in ELT.

(iv) The study would help the Academic Organizations like SCERTs, IASEs and the State Departments of Education to take necessary steps to organize Faculty Development Programs (FDPs) for English teachers in integrating digital technology in ELT with a view to enhance students' skills in English language learning.

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