

Digital Tools for English Language Teaching in Indian Schools

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Abstract

Digital tools can extend opportunities for English language learning, but their educational value depends on instructional design, teacher judgement and equitable access. This article reconsiders the use of multimedia, interactive exercises, audio resources and digital teaching materials in Indian schools. It examines how these resources can support comprehension, language practice and feedback while addressing multilingualism, linguistic identity, accessibility and the emerging use of generative artificial intelligence. The article distinguishes evidence of learning from indicators of participation and cautions against transferring findings from other educational settings directly to Indian school classrooms. It proposes a practical sequence linking learning objectives, accessible resources, purposeful tasks and independent assessment. Digital provision should support meaningful language use and teacher decision making rather than make access to expensive equipment a condition of participation.

Keywords: English language teaching, Indian schools, digital pedagogy, multimedia learning, multilingualism, generative artificial intelligence etc.

Introduction

The educational question surrounding digital English language teaching is how particular resources improve opportunities to understand and use language. A classroom can contain an interactive display and still offer few opportunities for students to speak, interpret a text or revise their writing. Conversely, a teacher using a shared audio player and carefully prepared print materials can organise substantial language practice.

Digital tools include recorded speech, captioned video, electronic texts, interactive exercises, collaborative writing environments and AI supported materials. These resources

differ in what they allow teachers and learners to do. Their selection should follow the language objective, the students' existing knowledge and the practical conditions of the classroom. UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report frames educational technology in relation to appropriateness, equity, evidence and sustainability, providing a useful basis for evaluating such decisions (UNESCO, 2023).

English learning in a multilingual setting

Historically, the purpose of language learning was for students to master the language's structures. However, in this age of communication, current language pedagogy places a premium on communication and the development of individuals who will eventually be able to communicate effectively in their native language. Indeed, the purpose of contemporary language teaching and learning is to motivate students to use the language for meaningful and productive communication both within and outside of the classroom. Whether in second language learning scenarios or in foreign language settings it has frequently been noticed that second/foreign language learners are hesitant to participate in class activities. Such reluctance and inactivity will sap their drive for language learning.

English proficiency is a necessary component of our lives in order to comprehend, read, speak, and write about a very simple concept applicable to the entire universe. Therefore, it is necessary to educate students with English Language Proficiency so that they can compete globally. The students must receive the essential input in the target language from both their teachers and the environment. Whether acquiring a first or second language, input-rich communication environments are one of the most important prerequisites. Textbooks, learner-selected materials, libraries, media-supported materials, and other authentic resources provide a wealth of input NCF (2005). If one receives a significant amount of input in the target language, English output will result. Widdowson (1978) stated, "Nothing should be said until it has been heard. Nothing is to be written before it is spoken. Nothing should be written until it has been read." The finest inputs yield the best output. Various research and theories have emphasized the significance of language input. "Rich and comprehensible input should serve as the foundation for the acquisition of all language skills" (NCF, 2005)

Digital English teaching should begin with the linguistic resources students bring to school. The National Education Policy 2020 emphasises multilingualism and recognises roles for technology in language learning and wider educational provision (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020). These policy commitments provide a rationale for designing English activities that acknowledge other languages rather than assuming that digital instruction must exclude them.

For example, students could first discuss the meaning of a short story in a familiar language, identify key English expressions and then produce an English summary. A bilingual glossary could support access to the text without replacing engagement with it. Such arrangements should specify when first language support is useful and when students need sustained opportunities to practise English. The purpose is to make the task accessible while preserving its language learning objective.

Pronunciation materials also involve choices about identity and communicative goals. Rose et al. (2021) review pedagogical research associated with Global Englishes and related approaches, which reconsider narrowly native speaker-oriented assumptions in ELT. Their review also identifies weaknesses in the research base, including limited longitudinal evidence and underrepresentation of settings outside university language classrooms. Consequently, the present article proposes exposure to varied comprehensible English speech while avoiding claims that one pronunciation model is appropriate for every Indian school context. Assessment can attend to intelligibility, meaning and audience alongside the language conventions required by the curriculum.

Pedagogical foundations

Multimedia learning offers a basis for deciding when pictures, speech and text belong together. Mayer (2021) explains learning from words and pictures through a cognitive account that recognises limited processing capacity and the importance of active meaning making. His research-based design principles include removing irrelevant material, directing attention to essential information and segmenting complex presentations. These principles do not mean that every lesson needs animation or that adding more media necessarily improves learning.

A suitable classroom application is to present a short passage with one relevant visual, allow time for interpretation and ask students to explain the connection. Decorative music, continuous animation and competing text may be unnecessary. When a literary passage invites multiple interpretations, a teacher can ask learners to imagine or sketch the scene before showing an adaptation. The adaptation then becomes an interpretation to discuss rather than an authoritative replacement for the text.

Teacher expertise provides a second foundation. Wohlfart and Wagner (2023) show, through an umbrella review of research on educational digitalisation, that teachers' roles extend beyond technical operation and involve digital literacy, technology integration and contextual barriers. Applied to ELT, this suggests professional learning organised around actual lessons: choosing an appropriate clip, adapting a task, interpreting learner responses and deciding when technology adds sufficient value to justify its use.

Digital resources and language learning activities

Audio and video for comprehension

Audio resources can make speech available for replay, comparison and focused listening. A proposed lesson might ask students to identify the purpose of an announcement, listen again for specific details and then reconstruct the message with a partner. The teacher can vary support through pauses, a partial transcript or vocabulary preparation. A final listening task with new content can indicate whether learners can apply the skill beyond the original recording.

Montero Perez (2022) reviews audiovisual input and the role of on-screen text in second or foreign language learning. The review distinguishes captions in the language of the soundtrack from subtitles in another language and considers comprehension, vocabulary and other learning outcomes. Its treatment of vocabulary demands and different text formats supports careful selection of resources rather than a universal rule about keeping captions on or off. For an ELT lesson, teachers could compare understanding with different levels of support and select the option that fits the immediate purpose.

A relevant empirical qualification comes from Montero Perez (2020). In a study involving 63 higher intermediate learners of French, vocabulary learning after documentary viewing was related to prior vocabulary knowledge and aspects of working memory. This study concerned French learners, not Indian school students, and should not be treated as direct evidence for the latter group. It illustrates why a single audiovisual resource may place different demands on learners with different starting points.

Reading and literary interpretation

Electronic texts can support annotation, dictionary consultation and comparison between passages. A teacher might ask learners to highlight evidence for an inference, explain an unfamiliar expression from context and then check a dictionary entry. The task should require a judgement about meaning, because opening a definition alone does not demonstrate understanding.

Literary resources require similar care. A filmed scene or animation can introduce an unfamiliar setting, but its costumes, voices and visual choices should remain open to criticism. Students could compare their initial interpretation with the adaptation and explain where the two differ. The educational issue is how the adaptation is used and whether students can justify their interpretations with evidence from the text.

5.3 Speaking and pronunciation

Recording tools can support a cycle of preparation, performance, listening and revision. Students could record a short explanation, identify one unclear expression and

produce a revised version. Peer feedback can use a small set of criteria, such as whether the main point was understood and whether an example helped the listener. Where individual recording is impractical, paired classroom rehearsal can serve the same immediate objective.

The proposed assessment should distinguish pronunciation from accent imitation. A student may communicate clearly while retaining features of a familiar variety of English. Consistent with the pedagogical questions raised by Rose et al. (2021), teachers should make the purpose of a pronunciation task explicit and avoid equating linguistic identity with deficiency. Exposure to multiple voices can become a listening exercise in understanding difference rather than ranking speakers.

Writing and revision

Digital writing environments allow teachers and learners to retain drafts and discuss changes. A proposed activity could ask students to write an explanation independently, receive feedback on organisation and clarity, and submit a revised version with a short account of their decisions. The account helps distinguish thoughtful revision from accepting every suggested change.

Automated corrections should be treated as prompts for evaluation. A teacher can select a few suggestions for class discussion and ask whether they preserve the writer's intended meaning. For assessment, an additional short task completed without automated assistance can provide evidence of independent performance. This is especially relevant when students have unequal access to writing software outside school.

Interactive exercises and assessment

Interactive questions can make learner responses visible during a lesson. Nevertheless, a correct multiple-choice answer may reflect guessing, recognition or repeated attempts. A proposed assessment sequence should therefore combine selected responses with explanation and production: choose an answer, justify it, and use the target language in a new sentence or exchange.

Feedback should lead to an instructional response. If several students select the same incorrect option, the teacher can ask them to explain their reasoning before offering another example. A dashboard is useful only insofar as its information supports such decisions. Time spent, badges and completion rates should be reported as participation indicators rather than treated as direct measures of language proficiency.

Access and implementation conditions

A feasible digital lesson must account for access during and beyond school. Relevant questions include whether resources can be used offline, whether a shared device is

sufficient, whether audio is audible throughout the room and whether printed alternatives preserve the task's objective. These questions are especially important when homework depends on a device that several family members share. They are implementation considerations, not estimates of the prevalence of particular conditions across India.

UNESCO (2023) highlights access, governance and teacher preparation as important conditions for educational technology. For school planning, the implication is to assess ongoing requirements alongside purchase costs: maintenance, replacement, technical support and staff time. A subscription should not be justified solely by the number of features advertised. Schools need to know whether teachers can adapt resources, retrieve materials when connectivity fails and continue teaching when equipment is unavailable.

Accessibility should be part of resource selection. Possible provisions include readable text, adequate contrast, transcripts, appropriate captions and alternative ways to demonstrate learning. These provisions need to be matched to individual learners and the task. For example, a transcript can support access to a discussion activity, although its use changes what can be inferred from a test intended to measure unaided listening.

Generative AI and Responsible Classroom Use

Generative AI adds the ability to produce sample dialogues, alternative explanations and differentiated practice materials. Kohnke et al. (2023) discuss ChatGPT's potential uses for language teaching and learning, together with the competencies needed to use it. Their article is a technology review, not proof that AI improves achievement in Indian schools. Accordingly, AI generated materials should be treated as drafts for professional review.

A teacher could ask an AI system to simplify a passage and then inspect whether essential meaning, factual accuracy and suitable language have been preserved. Another proposed activity is to compare two generated responses and identify unsupported claims or inappropriate expressions. These tasks place evaluation within the learning process. They should not require students to accept generated answers as authoritative.

Miao and Holmes (2023) advocate a human centred approach to generative AI in education, with attention to human agency, privacy, inclusion and linguistic diversity. For school ELT, this supports teacher mediated use, institutionally approved arrangements and clear expectations about assistance. Identifiable student information should not be entered into unapproved services. Teachers also need to check quotations, references and factual statements independently, since fluent output alone does not establish accuracy. Assessment should retain opportunities for students to demonstrate their own understanding and language use.

A Proposed Classroom Integration Sequence

An activity such as defining an observable language outcome, such as identifying reasons in a spoken explanation or writing a coherent paragraph can be done. Then, establish the support learners need and select a resource that can be accessed under classroom conditions. Third, organise a task requiring interpretation or communication rather than passive viewing. Fourth, provide focused feedback and time to respond to it. Finally, assess the outcome using a new example or an independent performance.

For instance, a lesson on giving directions could begin with a short-recorded exchange and a simple map. Students identify the route, compare their answers and practise a different route with a partner. A final exchange uses another map. The teacher can provide a live reading if playback fails, allowing the central activity to continue. This example is a proposed design rather than an evaluated intervention; its usefulness should be examined through learner performance and classroom observation.

Research Priorities and Limitations

The evidence reviewed here cannot establish a single effective model for India's diverse school systems. Some sources address international settings, higher education or languages other than English. Recent publication dates also do not mean that all underlying studies were conducted recently. The narrative selection process further limits comprehensiveness, and no claim is made that these sources exhaust the available literature.

Future studies should compare clearly specified instructional approaches while measuring baseline proficiency, implementation fidelity and sustained outcomes. Delayed assessments could examine retention; unfamiliar tasks could examine transfer; and observations could establish how much meaningful language use actually occurs. Where feasible, comparison groups should receive equivalent instructional time so that additional practice is not confused with a technology effect. Speaking and writing studies should report scoring procedures and interrater agreement.

Research should also examine who benefits and at what cost. Relevant analyses could consider school resources, language background, disability related access needs and opportunities for practice outside school. Teacher interviews and lesson observations can explain difficulties that achievement scores alone do not reveal. Such work would strengthen decisions about adaptation and scale, while avoiding the assumption that favourable learner opinions demonstrate sustained language development.

Conclusion

Digital tools can broaden the resources available for English teaching, but their contribution must be judged through purposeful activity and credible evidence of learning. The strongest practical approach is to connect accessible materials with clear objectives,

opportunities for communication, responsive feedback and independent assessment. Multilingual resources and varied English voices should be considered within curricular goals and learners' communicative needs. Generative AI adds possibilities for material preparation and critical evaluation while increasing the need for verification and teacher oversight. For Indian schools, the priority is an educationally justified and locally feasible use of technology, supported by research that examines sustained outcomes and equitable participation.

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