



EXPLORING CHALLENGES IN EFL CLASSES IN THE NEW DIGITAL LANDSCAPES

A. DRAGOESCU, L. KAMBERI, I. IOSIM, M. LUNGU
USVT 'King Mihai I' from Timisoara, Romania

Abstract: *Digital education has come into focus with recent global developments, which have led to research directions taking a radical shift towards digitalized training. Institutions all over the world, including academic establishments, were forced to find strategies to adapt to the pervasive introduction of distance education. The paper discusses the challenges and solutions found by academic institutions in North Macedonia (Tetovo University) and Romania as to digital learning strategies. Data were collected using questionnaires, via Google Docs, in which participants were asked to reflect on their experience. Responses were subjected to a modified content analysis to identify the main themes and topics. Semi-structured interviews were undertaken via Google Classroom to substantiate the essential findings of the subsequent content analysis. Besides building digital skills from a technological point of view, the paper also highlights the need to enhance situational and communicative settings in digital environments.*

• Introduction

While Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) was launched as far back as the early 60s and 70s in the western world, it is still considered highly relevant. A growing need is felt for Open Educational Resources (OER), such as free instructional materials, tools, technologies, as well as applications with applicability to language education and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) communication.

Based on Rogers's Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory (2003), this side of the world would fall under the last of his five adopters – Late Majority. However, one cannot blame individuals alone, but rather system evolution. It can be inferred that the diffusion of innovation or the lack thereof is caused by a variety of factors including the larger social-cultural context.

Material and method

The paper explores digital learning in language classes based on questionnaire analysis and comparative analysis of interviews conducted with 70 students from both universities, based on the cognitive approach, interactionism and connectivism theory.

• Results and discussions

- Participants completed a questionnaire sent via Google Docs, consisting of 8 questions of multiple choice and open-ended types, required respondents to reflect on their experiences during the pandemic.
- Semi-structured interviews were undertaken in stage two to substantiate the essential findings of the subsequent content analysis, by focusing on the most critical responses of the online questionnaire.
- The questionnaire was sent to 70 students, out of which 64 (n=64) responded, representing 96% of the cohort. Only 7 of the 64 students agreed to take part in stage 2 of the study (semi-structured interviews).
- Quantitative data from questionnaire responses were analyzed using content analytical procedures.
- **Conclusions**
- Based on the findings, we may suggest stakeholders in higher education overcome traditional learning tools and adopt / share open education resources (OER) to encourage more accessible education.