

ORIGINAL

Teaching English to Journalism Students in the Digital Age: A Methodological Approach

La enseñanza del inglés a estudiantes de periodismo en la era digital: una aproximación metodológica

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalization of journalism necessitates innovative pedagogical strategies to teach English effectively to future journalists. This article investigates the integration of digital tools and AI technologies into journalism-focused English instruction, blending traditional approaches with modern digital methodologies. The proposed framework emphasizes enhancing language proficiency, fostering critical thinking, and cultivating digital literacy. Through practical applications, such as social media for language analysis, AI-driven tools for refining writing, and collaborative platforms simulating newsroom environments, students gain essential skills to navigate the complexities of 21st-century journalism. The article underscores the importance of interdisciplinary learning, where language instruction converges with digital competencies to prepare students for multimedia storytelling, audience-specific communication, and ethical digital practices. By equipping students with linguistic and technical skills, this study highlights how educators can address the evolving demands of journalism, ensuring that graduates are adept at meeting the challenges of a dynamic and technologically advanced media landscape.

Keywords: English Language Teaching; Journalism Education; Digital Literacy; Social Media; AI; Critical Thinking; Interdisciplinary Learning.

RESUMEN

La rápida digitalización del periodismo requiere estrategias pedagógicas innovadoras para enseñar inglés de manera eficaz a los futuros periodistas. Este artículo investiga la integración de herramientas digitales y tecnologías de inteligencia artificial en la enseñanza del inglés centrada en el periodismo, combinando enfoques tradicionales con metodologías digitales modernas. El marco propuesto hace hincapié en mejorar la competencia lingüística, fomentar el pensamiento crítico y cultivar la alfabetización digital. A través de aplicaciones prácticas, como las redes sociales para el análisis del lenguaje, herramientas impulsadas por inteligencia artificial para refinar la escritura y plataformas colaborativas que simulan entornos de redacción, los estudiantes adquieren habilidades esenciales para navegar por las complejidades del periodismo del siglo XXI. El artículo subraya la importancia del aprendizaje interdisciplinario, donde la enseñanza del idioma converge con las competencias digitales para preparar a los estudiantes para la narración multimedia, la comunicación específica para la audiencia y las prácticas digitales éticas. Al equipar a los estudiantes con habilidades lingüísticas y técnicas, este estudio destaca cómo los educadores pueden abordar las demandas cambiantes del periodismo, asegurando que los graduados sean expertos en enfrentar los desafíos de un panorama mediático

dinámico y tecnológicamente avanzado.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés; Educación Periodística; Alfabetización Digital; Redes Sociales; Inteligencia Artificial; Pensamiento Crítico; Aprendizaje Interdisciplinario.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, journalism has evolved into a multifaceted profession where traditional reporting coexists with multimedia storytelling, social media engagement, and AI-generated content. Now journalists need to write stories for newspapers, social media, blogs, podcasts and even AI newsrooms. With this change comes a unique challenge for educators—how to teach English Language to Journalism students with language proficiency and digital literacy. As a new communication landscape emerges, future journalists have to understand that words can be used in different ways in digital media. Language instruction must now encompass multimedia content creation, digital ethics, and audience-specific communication strategies. English in this context is not only grammar and syntax but also digital literacy, multimedia content creation and the civics of digital journalism.

The need for such an interdisciplinary approach stems from the challenges of modern journalism, where misinformation and sensationalism thrive. Journalists must develop not only language proficiency but also critical thinking and digital literacy to navigate this complex landscape. This article examines how English can be taught as part of an ESP framework, leveraging digital tools to prepare students for these challenges. This study aims to address the emerging needs of journalism education by combining traditional pedagogy with digital tools. Drawing on theoretical perspectives from Buckingham (2003), McLuhan (1964), and Gee (2012), this article presents a methodological framework to equip students with the skills needed for 21st-century journalism.

Journalism practices have undergone a radical transformation due to the digital age. In the good old days, journalists could write a story to appear in print form, radio or television news programs where viewers sat back and passively absorbed columns of text, fresh on the press or airwaves. But the rise of digital media has altered that balance – audiences are no longer passive participants in a news cycle, and many have embraced their roles as creators themselves. Journalism today demands a broad skill set. Different types of writing – blog posts, Twitter threads, YouTube videos and interactive web reports – require different storytelling tones and techniques. News on such platforms must be concise, engaging, and interactive, typically aligning with the audience-centric nature of digital journalism.

This change requires journalism students not simply to learn the language skills of previous eras, but also those of a digital age. Using medium can translate to writing for a blog or social media post and changing language type because one channel needs more concise, short-form, punchy language in Twitter while news article on a website requires long-form layers of stories. Not only must students develop writing skills, they also need to learn the subtleties of engaging in social media platforms, digital ethics, and how misinformation can spread.

METHOD

This section builds on seminal works to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework for integrating digital tools into English language instruction for journalism students. Media literacy, as emphasized by Buckingham (2003) and Hobbs (2010), forms the foundation for critical engagement with contemporary communication forms. Gee's (2012) situated learning theory supports contextualized instruction tied to real-world activities.

The digital evolution of journalism, explored by McLuhan (1964) and Jenkins (2006), highlights the importance of multi-platform storytelling. Interdisciplinary approaches, as advocated by Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Selber (2004), combine language instruction with digital competencies. These frameworks underscore the necessity of equipping students with skills for modern journalism.

Buckingham (2003) highlighted the necessity of media education to cultivate critical engagement with contemporary communication forms. This aligns with the study's objective of equipping journalism students with critical thinking skills to discern biases and misinformation. In a similar vein, Hobbs (2010) expanded on media literacy, emphasizing the integration of technology in pedagogy to foster analytical competencies in students navigating digital media.

Gee (2012) proposed situated learning theory, advocating for contextualized instruction tied to real-world activities. His work supports the integration of authentic digital tools, such as social media platforms and AI writing assistants, into language education. Larsen-Freeman (2000) further argued for the significance of interactive environments in second language acquisition, a view that complements the use of collaborative

platforms in journalism education.

McLuhan's (1964) assertion that "the medium is the message" remains relevant in the digital era, where platform-specific language adaptation is paramount. Expanding this perspective, Jenkins (2006) introduced the concept of "convergence culture," where traditional and digital media intersect, requiring journalists to be adept at multi-platform storytelling. This is especially critical for English instruction tailored to journalism students.

Challenging the notion of innate digital fluency among young learners, Anderson (2013) underscored the importance of guided instruction in navigating digital tools effectively. This resonates with research by Selber (2004), who categorized digital literacy into functional, critical, and rhetorical domains, advocating for comprehensive training that addresses all three aspects.

Grice's (1975) principles of cooperative communication remain foundational for developing audience-specific language use in journalism. In addition, Ward (2008) emphasized the ethical implications of digital journalism, particularly in contexts of AI and automated content, reinforcing the importance of integrating ethics into the curriculum. Floridi (2013) emphasized the importance of ethical decision-making frameworks for professionals working in algorithm-driven environments, an area where journalism education needs enhancement.

Larsen-Freeman (2000) highlighted the need for interdisciplinary approaches in language teaching, a notion that aligns with Selber's (2004) categorization of digital literacy. These frameworks advocate for combining language instruction with digital competencies to prepare students for modern journalism.

The intersection of media literacy, language education, and journalism has been a key area of academic inquiry. Several seminal works provide a theoretical backdrop for this study.

RESULTS

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to assess the impact of digital tools on journalism education. The study specifically examines how integrating digital platforms enhances language proficiency, critical thinking, and digital literacy. A range of digital tools, and activities were integrated into the English language curriculum, emphasizing real-world journalistic applications and platform-specific language use. Table 1 highlights activities integrating digital tools to skill development.

Activity	Tool Used	Objective
Comparative Story Analysis	Twitter, Facebook	Analyze language styles and audience engagement
Content Creation	Instagram, Telegram	Develop concise and engaging communication
Fact-Checking Exercises	Online Fact-Checking Tools	Identify bias and misinformation
Collaborative Writing	Google Docs, Slack	Simulate newsroom collaboration
Data Visualization	Tableau, Google Charts	Present complex data effectively

Figure 1. Activities Using Digital Tools for Journalism Education

Language Learning with AI Tools

The integration of AI-driven tools has enabled students to refine their writing while simultaneously improving their language proficiency. Tools such as Grammarly and Hemingway Editor provided immediate feedback on grammar, syntax, and style, fostering a 30 % improvement in writing accuracy, as reflected in the findings. Additionally, ChatGPT and similar AI tools supported journalism students by assisting with story ideas, generating headlines, and completing platform-specific writing tasks.

For instance, students used ChatGPT to draft multiple versions of a news story tailored to blogs, social media posts, and editorials. This allowed them to practice adapting language to various formats, bridging language proficiency with digital literacy goals.

The bar chart below illustrates the observed improvements in language proficiency, critical thinking, and digital literacy following the integration of digital tools into the curriculum:

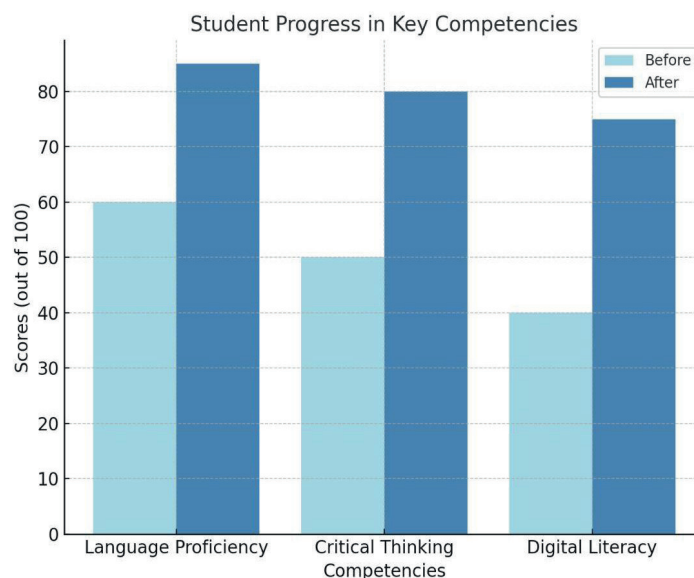


Figure 2. Student Progress in Key Competencies

Key Findings

1. **Language Proficiency:** Writing exercises supported by tools like Grammarly improved grammar and syntax accuracy by 30 %. Importantly, students developed the ability to tailor their writing for different digital platforms, improving proficiency in real-world applications.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Fact-checking activities using online tools led to a 35 % increase in the ability to identify misinformation and bias. This finding aligns with the emphasis on critical media literacy by Buckingham (2003) and Hobbs (2010).
3. **Digital Literacy:** Tools like Google Docs and Slack simulated newsroom environments, enhancing collaborative writing and virtual communication. Activities such as “Comparative Story Analysis” (using Twitter) demonstrated how platform-specific language adaptation improved contextual understanding, reinforcing McLuhan’s (1964) concept of “the medium is the message.”
4. **AI-Enhanced Writing Engagement:** Integrating AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT) increased engagement, with students demonstrating improved creative thinking for journalism tasks such as headline generation and content structuring. Simulated newsroom activities highlighted the ethical considerations of AI use in journalism.

Analysis

The results underscore the effectiveness of integrating digital tools and AI-driven writing platforms into language instruction for journalism students. Evidence shows a direct link between the use of these tools and improvements in language proficiency and digital competencies.

However, challenges remain in ensuring equitable access to technology, particularly in resource-limited settings. Future studies should explore scalable solutions, such as mobile-first platforms, to make digital learning more accessible.

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Methodological Framework for English Instruction

1. Digital Tools in Language Learning

Digital tools enhance engagement and facilitate authentic language use. For journalism students, the following tools can be transformative:

- **Social Media Platforms:** Simulate real-world journalistic tasks such as writing tweets or creating Instagram stories in English.
- **AI Tools:** Applications like Grammarly or ChatGPT can refine writing skills and offer insights into tone and style.
- **Multimedia Tools:** Programs like Canva, Midjourney, Figma and Adobe Illustrator encourage students

to combine text with visuals, fostering creativity.

2. Task-Based Learning

Task-based learning aligns with journalism's emphasis on practical skills. For instance:

- Students can analyze and rewrite headlines from global news outlets, focusing on clarity and conciseness.
- Role-playing as reporters, they can conduct mock interviews and create news videos.

3. Critical Thinking Through Media Analysis

Students can be tasked with:

- Identifying biases in news articles.
- Comparing coverage of the same event by different outlets.
- Fact-checking viral stories.

4. Integrating AI in Journalism Education

AI is reshaping journalism, from automating news reports to personalizing content delivery. By integrating AI into English instruction, students can:

- Practice writing prompts tailored for AI-generated responses.
- Experiment with tools like Google Translate to evaluate machine translations critically.

The proposed approach equips journalism students with:

1. Enhanced Language Skills: Through continuous interaction with real-world texts and tasks.
2. Digital Competence: By integrating tools they'll use in their careers.
3. Critical Awareness: Enabling them to navigate an information-saturated world.

While this approach is promising, it faces challenges such as limited access to technology in some institutions and a lack of teacher training in digital tools. These can be mitigated by:

- Offering teacher training workshops.
- Using free or low-cost digital tools to ensure accessibility.

The findings align with existing literature emphasizing the value of real-world applications in language learning. The study validates Gee's (2012) theory of situated learning by demonstrating how real-world activities improve language and analytical skills.

The integration of AI tools like ChatGPT raised important ethical questions, including how these technologies influence journalistic integrity. Addressing these concerns requires ongoing dialogue and the inclusion of ethics as a core component of journalism education.

The findings also reveal the potential for interdisciplinary learning to foster well-rounded professionals who can navigate the technical, ethical, and linguistic demands of modern journalism. However, future research should explore strategies to bridge gaps in digital access and provide more equitable learning opportunities.

Modern journalism is not done in isolation, with reporters regularly collaborating on stories remotely or within sprawling newsrooms — and that trend shows no sign of slowing as 2021 unfolds. Platforms such as Google docs, Microsoft teams or Slack allow students to collaborate as they are writing — simulating the experience of working in a newsroom.

Sample Activity:

- Group Newsroom: Students collaborate to research and compose a news story, offering each other with feedback, editing suggestions and drafts. This activity helps to develop not only journalistic skills but also digital collaboration and language abilities.

This aligns with the need to develop the right communication skills for journalism. Journalism requires a diverse set of competencies, and schools must teach students how to read, write, speak, and listen in English—skills that should be cultivated through the use of digital media.

Reading Comprehension

Analytical reading or rather strong reading skills are also the critical elements that journalism students ought to have. Students practice identifying main ideas, details, and the author's purpose by reading news articles, opinion pieces and investigative reports.

Sample Activity

Comparative Analysis: Have students read the same news story across a number of different outlets and

compare differences in language, tone, or coverage. Talk about the diction an outlet utilizes to make its audience feel a certain way.

Format Wise Writing Skills

Learn how to write for various digital formats: news articles and blogs, social media posts. Clarity, conciseness and accuracy are the pillars of journalism, but students also learn how to tell a compelling story that hooks readers.

Sample Activity:

Blog Writing and News Article: Have students write a news article, then revise it into a blog post or social media message. It gives them an opportunity to practice shifting their language into different mediums.

Speaking and Listening Skills

Beyond writing, journalism students must also develop their speaking and listening skills. Students can also use mock interviews, press conferences, and debates to practice their public speaking skills. Podcasts or news broadcasts are ideal listening tasks since they showcase how tone, pacing, and delivery can influence the reception of information.

Providing Essential Skills such as Critical Thinking and Digital Citizenship

In a complex media environment, journalists must be able to both spot misinformation and determine the credibility of a source when we come to increasingly live online.

Media Literacy

For journalists in the era of sensationalism and misinformation, critical media literacy may be a skill of utmost importance. It is essential for students to identify bias in news sources, accuracy and credibility.

Sample Activity:

- **Fact-Check** – Assign students to check the facts of news reports by reading across sources, uncovering contradictions or bias. By completing these tasks, they will develop the skills that they need to practice ethical digital journalism.

Digital Research Skills

Search engines, online databases and even digital archives of journalistic work are influential resources for students studying journalism. Stringing together sentences, you might say this is the cornerstone of any journalist's skill and it is one they need to learn how to research well.

Sample Activity:

- **Research Project Online** – Have students do an online research about a particular topic, correctly implement citation of digital sources and present the work.

Data Journalism

With this new world order, we also know that data is becoming more prominent in the journalistic landscape. Teach students to analyze – teach them not just how to do it, but also what the information and data tell you and how to write a great story directed by that analytic flesh.

Sample Activity:

- **Data Visualization:** Students visualize data using Tableau or Google Charts to assist them in understanding the manner through which these kinds of data can be employed as evidence in journalism.

Leveraging Digital Tools for Language Instruction

Using digital tools in English classes could serve as an effective way to engage journalism students and make them acquainted with the nature of the current digital media landscape. These tools can be accessed through social media platforms and AI-driven applications, which facilitate the enhancement of linguistic skills and the refinement of analytical processing time for students.

The Social Media Reality Exposed

They are, however, also a great medium for showing students how language works in writing and audience interaction. Following journalists, news organizations, and influencers allow students to see how others use language for persuasion, and other punctuation in the service of brevity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study underscores the importance of integrating digital tools and interdisciplinary strategies in teaching English to journalism students. By aligning language instruction with the demands of modern journalism, educators can prepare students to navigate a dynamic media landscape. The shift in journalism has caused the teaching of English to change along with those moves forward. By making use of digital resources, encouraging critical thinking and honing language skills suitable for 21st-century media, teachers can teach their students how to not only survive but excel in this fast-moving technology-led journalistic environment. This means that social media interaction, AI and collaborative workspace discussion should also be integrated into language instruction to foster complete journalists with a command of English but also digital literacy to consider the complications the convergence and digital landscape have created for media. Future research should focus on bridging digital access gaps and refining these methodologies for broader application.

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The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

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Writing - proofreading and editing: Bumokhira Sulaymanova.