Enhancing Digital Humanism in English Language Teaching through Digital Humanities

B. Kumaran
Ph.D. Research Scholar (Part Time), Department of English
Guru Nanak College (A), Chennai, India

Dr. L.R.S. Kalanithi
Associate Professor and Research Supervisor, Department of English
Dean, School of Languages, Guru Nanak College (A), Chennai, India

Abstract
Globally, English Language Teaching and Learning and the communication practices have been undergoing tremendous changes in the 21st-century of the Third Millennium. Digital Age has established itself with a rich source of information through different Applications of social media upto Chat GPT and other Artificial Intelligence tools in the recent times. It reduces strain in teaching and learning and gives emphasis to knowledge-based strategies. Radio, newspapers and television were the main sources of information before the arrival of the internet. Technology has revolutionized information access across all sectors, largely replacing humans in global learning, making it quick and cost-effective. The move from physical to mental labour has also become widespread, as the transformation of man from traditional practices to technological advancements. Today the success of English as a Global Language and the learning of it relies on surplus information and human resources, with data storage at its peak. Microphotography, microform, wireless networking,internet, information sharing, mobile phones, pocket laptops, and digital cameras evolved.

Digital Humanities has opened avenues for intellectual activity using Digital Technology to give a new dimension to the various disciplines in Humanities. Digital resources in Humanities give a face-lift in teaching and learning. When there is no urban/rural divide among the teaching community across the globe, all the teachers of English are expected to have a better knowledge in the use of the latest tools to teach English as a language to any kind of learners effectively with the same humanistic approach practised in conventional teaching. Knowledge of Digital humanities is essential to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

This paper aims at contextualising English as a global language by teaching its literature through Digital format by converting the print form of literature into eBooks, Digital Archives, Electronic Literature, and Language Games along with Digital Humanism,which is yet another face of Digital Humanities. According to Hannes Werthner, Co-founder, Digital Humanism Initiative, "Digital humanism is a broader approach to designing a digital future with respect to human needs."
Keywords: DH (Digital Humanities), Technology, Information, Language Learning, Digital Archives, Electronic Literature, etc.,

Introduction

According to Nazia Hassan, "Importance of technology is focused by many educational commissions and policies. Thelatest National Education Policy 2020 also highlights importance of technology in education to make learning more experiential, holistic, learner-centred, enjoyable and flexible."

Over the last few years, Digital Humanities, formerly known as 'humanities computing,' has grown significantly with digital tools and storage archives to preserve literary texts. This new form of the Digital Imaging has transformed the ability to study these materials. It is unreasonable to reject the notion that digital technology is infiltrating the academia, as computers have been used for humanist purposes since their inception. Instead, Computers are to be used with humanist approach though they are mere digital devices. Digital Humanities refutes the notion that digital technology is encroaching on the academic deliberations. Network technologies, such as the World Wide Web, revolutionized how the humanities interacted with digital technologies in the 1990s. Many educational Projects were launched for digitizing texts and cultural artefacts at libraries, archives, and museums. 3D visualization and geographic information systems have also become popular among the researchers of humanities researchers. This has led to an increased interest in born-digital data curation and research.

According to Burdick et al (2012),"Digital Humanities refers to new modes of scholarship and institutional units for collaborative, transdisciplinary, and computationally engaged research, teaching, and publication. Digital Humanities is less a unified field than an array of convergent practices that explore a universe in which print is no longer the primary medium in which knowledge is produced and disseminated".Digital Humanities is a scholarly field that studies human thoughts, actions and experiences, digital media, including teaching, writing, research, by using the technology. Digital texts inspire democratic engagement and a sense of community learning. Additionally, Digital Humanities facilitates access to various e-books and student feedback. In the Digital Age, literature has been thriving, and writers and academics have been reflecting accordingly. Writers respond to electronic media with the aid of mass media, radio, television, and film. Print journals suggest electronic language learning of the recent writers' works through blogs and Wikipedia. Bykov and Leshchenko (2016)defined Digital Humanities as"it is a new pedagogical discipline covering the problems of creating an integrated positive educational reality by the interaction of the 'bio' and "techno" components to ensure a high quality of education in both real and virtual worlds."

The future development of Digital Humanities is influenced by various factors, including a growing trend in higher education to focus more on digital humanities than traditional coursework, as students increasingly appreciate the unique opportunities offered through computer-based learning. The future of digital humanities is anticipated to be impacted by numerous concerns. Academic institutions have standard Digital Humanities courses above traditional ones because computer-based learning offers unique opportunities for students to engage with historical and cultural artefacts. Online access to information and experiences has increased global connections, which has sparked the growth of digital humanities. A greater number of books and academic papers on topics related to digital humanities have also been released, increasing the accessibility of important research and education.

Language Teaching and Learning with Digital Humanities

Teaching language and literature electronically is a challenging academic task that is impacted by social, cultural, and economic variables. While teaching and practising language skills as a subset of the Digital Humanities, e-learning might shift as a result of improvements in global education, by creating a forum for communication and bridging the divide among the humanities, sciences, and technology. Schreibman et al (2004)state:"The digital humanities, then, and their interdisciplinary core found in the field of humanities computing, have a long and dynamic history best illustrated by an examination of the locations at which specific disciplinary practices intersect with computation." The incorporation of digital technologies in language instruction while upholding a human-centred approach is known as "Digital Humanism in Language Teaching."

The process of English Language Learning strikes a balance between the preservation of human values, empathy, and deep interpersonal relationships with technical improvements. There are some important facets and things to think about while using digital humanism in language instruction.

Language learning environments offer exceptional chances for cognitive skill development, intellectual advancement, and cross-cultural interaction. By bringing the digital humanities into the language classroom, teachers can help students improve their language proficiency while also developing their research and critical thinking skills. For language teachers who are interested in the possibilities of Digital Humanities, integrating the Digital Humanities into the Language Classroom creates a better environment to start because it is full of practical suggestions and examples from real-world situations. Language learning has significantly influenced the development of digital humanities, with open-access publishing, resources, and digital archives making scholarship and pedagogy accessible to the public. Contribution to projects in Digital Humanities such as data analysis, data mining, databases, visualization, and text archiving. These tools enable scholars to study recurring words, patterns, and themes in novels, examine changes in editions, and map locations to recreate historical events. The connection between literature and digital humanities is attributed to the ease of managing text data, the long-standing association between computers and composition, the creation of electronic archives, and the growing interest in e-reading. Hayles (2011),states that Digital Humanities has been instrumental in improving intellectual activities through new practices with better standards and applying theory into practice.

Digital humanities technology allows for more effective investigation of many cultures and times. One may learn about the history of race and ethnicity through it, as well as how people interact with their surroundings. It is beneficial for academics and students alike to approach technical breakthroughs from a social standpoint. The world has been changing as a result of the digital era, which made it possible to access data and information online and replaced conventional reading with virtual media like texting and tweeting. The subjects of Traditional Humanities, particularly creative writing and literature, struggle to adapt to the digital age, presenting both challenges and opportunities for fresh and creative approaches. There are many opportunities to learn and build stronger relationships in online communities.

Digital Humanities can be Applied to the Study of the English Language in the Following Ways

Learning Environment

Digital resources may be utilized to establish inclusive learning environments that accommodate a range of learning styles, skills, and backgrounds. Technology improves learning for all learners rather than creating obstacles in the way of access and participation.

Human-Centred Design

Digital Language Learning tools and platforms are created with a focus on learners' needs and preferences, taking cultural and individual differences into account. In order to create more effective and engaging learning tools, users' feedback has to be included to involve learners in the design process.

Cultural Sensitivity

Digital Tools are included in language education that enhance cultural sensitivity and understanding. This includes audiovisual content reflecting many linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Students have to be allowed to interact with the native speakers of the target language from other regions using technology to encourage cross-cultural conversation and collaboration.

Tailored Learning

Technology has to be used to deliver learning experiences by tailoring material and activities to individual learner requirements and progress. Intelligent tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms have to be implemented that provide each student with tailored support and feedback.

Technology and Human Interaction in Balance

A balance in language teaching has to be maintained between the use of technology and face-to-face encounters. Human connection should be supplemented and enhanced by technology, not replaced. Digital technologies have to be used to let students communicate, collaborate, and connect with one another and with teachers.

Use of Ethical Technology

Ethical considerations in the use of technology, such as privacy, data security, and responsible digital citizenship have to be encouraged among the users. Learners have to be educated on how to utilize language and communication ethically in digital settings, stressing respectful and responsible online behaviour.

Continuous Training and Assistance

Continuous training and assistance to teachers have to be provided as they integrate digital resources into their language teaching techniques. Educators have to be encouraged to form a community of practice where they may share best practices, resources, and experiences relating to digital humanism in language education. In language teaching, digital humanism acknowledges the potential of technology to improve language acquisition while emphasizing the need to maintain a human touch and conserve the cultural and interpersonal aspects of language instruction.

Balancing Digital and Analog Learning

The value of digital and analog learning experiences has to be recognized while balancing digital and analog learning. While technology can provide interactive and engaging platforms, conventional approaches such as reading real books and having face-to-face conversations should not be overlooked. Both teachers and learners may not have the opportunities all the time to use technology-oriented platforms. Traditional classrooms cannot be replaced with virtual classrooms always. Hybrid learning is still relevant.

Innovation through Technology

Students need to be encouraged to use technology as a method of creative expression in language and literature studies by encouraging them to use technology as a means of innovative learning. Digital storytelling, multimedia projects, and collaborative online writing platforms could all fall under this category. It is to be understood that innovation through technology would help the teachers to develop their profession and learners to achieve their language learning goal.

Adaptation and Lifelong Learning

In the digital era, the need for adaptation and lifelong learning has to be emphasized. NEP 2020 also insists on this. It is better to train students to manage shifting technology and stay informed in a fast-changing scenario.

Professional Development of Teaching Community

It is to be made possible for teachers by providing opportunities to stay current on the newest breakthroughs in educational technology and the principles of digital humanism.

Community Engagement

Using digital platforms fosters a feeling of community among learners. Virtual book clubs, online writing workshops, or collaborative language learning programs fall under this category. By incorporating digital humanism concepts into language and literature study, educators can reap the benefits of technology while preserving and enhancing education's humanistic values. The goal is to build a learning environment that is not just technologically advanced, but also ethical, inclusive, and focused on learners' well-being.

Tools for Learning English Language in Digital Humanism

The ethical and intelligent integration of technology into human existence, recognizing and honouring human values, dignity, and well-being, is referred to as digital humanism. When it comes to language and literature acquisition, digital humanism can be used through a variety of correction tools such as Turnitin, Quill Bot, Grammarly and ways that improve the learning experience while emphasizing human-centric ideals.

Tools and Practices for Language Learning
Digital Apps for Language Learning

Platforms like Babbel, Busuu, Duolingo, FluentU, Mango Languages, Memrise, Mondly, Rosetta Stone, Verbling, etc., use gamification and interactive methods to make language learning engaging and enjoyable.

Virtual Tutoring and Conversation Partners

Italki, Tandem, HelloTalk, etc.,connect the language learners with native speakers for virtual language exchange and tutoring, fostering cultural understanding and personal connections.

Digital Libraries and E-books

Project Gutenberg, Google Books, Kindle, etc.,provide access to a vast collection of literature and language resources, promoting widespread availability of educational content.

Adaptive Learning Systems

Language Learning Apps (e.g., Babbel, Busuu) utilize AI algorithms to personalize learning experiences based on individual progress, adapting to the learner's pace and style.

Interactive Storytelling Platforms

Storybird, Write Reader, etc.,encourage language learners to create their own stories or read stories written by others, promoting creativity and language expression.

Collaborative Writing Tools

Google Docs, Microsoft Word Online, etc.,facilitate collaborative writing and editing, enabling students to work together on language projects and literature analysis.

Online Book Clubs and Discussion Forums

Goodreads, Reddit Book Clubs, etc.,provide platforms for discussing literature, sharing insights, and connecting with other language learners, fostering a sense of community learning.

Speech Recognition Technology

Speech-to-Text Tools assist learners in improving pronunciation and oral communication skills by providing real-time feedback on the target language.

Digital Annotation Tools

Hypothesis and Genius enable collaborative annotation and analysis of texts, encouraging critical thinking and literary interpretation.

Conclusion

In the context of teaching English using digital tools, Digital Humanism highlights the need to preserve technology and to conserve human values by promoting moral and significant interactions in the virtual classroom. It is critical to put user privacy and data security first when integrating digital tools into learning of language and literature. Additionally, technology enhances meaningful human connections. Fostering diversity and honouring the human element of education require taking into account a variety of viewpoints, cultural norms, and accessibility issues. It is essential to note that the evolution of digital humanism depends on the actions and decisions of various stakeholders, including governments, technology developers, businesses, and civil society. Ongoing discussions, research, and policy developments will likely shape the future trajectory of digital humanism. Teaching and learning in the digital era require a thoughtful integration of technology, a focus on digital literacy, and a commitment to addressing the challenges that arise. The goal is to harness the benefits of technology while ensuring equity, inclusivity, and the development of essential skills for the modern world. Digital Humanities enhances teaching by enabling students to easily search, combine data sources, and hyperlink to relevant materials, enhancing their learning experience and collaboration. Though technology may make teaching and learning joyful, dynamic and creative, the challenges have to be recognized while using such tools. Though there is a shift from the print medium of Humanities to Digital Humanities, the conventional ethical and moral practises of teaching and learning need to be sustained for ever. Dr.Naziya Hassan states,"While using technological resources, teachers need to recognize the challenges and make balance and to cultivate collaboration among students. Along with the usage of these technologies, learners must be taught about issues concerning privacy, security and academic honesty. Through it, students will become life-long learners in this digital age."The quality of ELT becomes enhanced automatically through Digital Humanities by incorporating Digital Humanism into it.

References

1. Burdick, A., Drucker, J., Lunenfeld, P., Presner, T., & Schnapp, J. *Digital_Humanities*. MIT Press, 2012.
2. Bykov, V. Y., & Leschenko, M. P. Digital Humanistic Pedagogy: Relevant problems of Scientific Research in the field of using ICT in Education. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools*, 53(3), 2016.
3. Hayles, N. K. How We Think: Transforming Power and Digital Technologies. *Understanding Digital Humanities,* Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
4. Lanham, R. *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts*. University of Chicago Press, 2010.
5. Hassan, N. Exploring Web Resources for Teaching of English Language Skills. *Journal of English Language Teaching*, 64(2), 2022.
6. Schreibman, S., Siemens, R., & Unsworth, J. *A Companion to Digital Humanities*. John Wiley & Sons, 2008.