

TEACHING SYNTAX IN THE DIGITAL AGE: TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR EDUCATORS

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Abstract

This paper explores contemporary approaches to teaching syntax in the digital era, examining how technology integration and modern pedagogical methods can enhance students' understanding of linguistic structures. The research investigates various digital tools, interactive platforms, and innovative teaching strategies that effectively support syntax instruction in both traditional and virtual learning environments. Through a comprehensive analysis of recent studies and practical applications, this paper provides educators with evidence-based recommendations for incorporating digital resources into syntax instruction while maintaining pedagogical effectiveness.

Keywords: Syntax teaching, Digital pedagogy, educational technology, Linguistics education

INTRODUCTION

This study is motivated by the evolving demands of syntax instruction in the digital age, where traditional methods often fail to fully engage learners and accommodate diverse learning styles. While digital tools hold promise for transforming syntax teaching, the field lacks systematic and comprehensive frameworks for integrating such tools effectively. As highlighted in the bibliometric review of space syntax research by Mohamed and van der Laag Yamu (2023), there is a tendency in many disciplines, including education, to focus on isolated studies without a consolidated approach to mapping trends, identifying gaps, and exploring actionable solutions. Similarly, the domain of syntax instruction lacks a cohesive strategy to evaluate the interplay between digital tools and pedagogical effectiveness.

The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to bridge the gap between theoretical constructs and practical implementation in syntax education. Drawing on the systematic methodologies exemplified in space syntax studies, this research employs a combination of qualitative insights and quantitative analysis to assess the integration of digital tools in syntax teaching. By adapting principles of data-driven exploration from the space syntax domain, the study provides a robust framework for educators to evaluate and enhance their instructional practices.

Furthermore, this research introduces an interdisciplinary approach to syntax teaching by aligning linguistic theory with technological advancements and contextualized learning. In doing so, it addresses critical challenges such as ensuring inclusivity, preventing oversimplification of syntax concepts, and fostering deeper engagement. These efforts resonate with the need for holistic methodologies in educational research, as underscored by

Mohamed and van der Laag Yamu (2023), to move beyond descriptive analyses and develop actionable strategies that advance both practice and scholarship.

The teaching of syntax, a fundamental component of linguistic education, has undergone significant transformation with the advent of digital technologies and online learning platforms. As educational institutions increasingly embrace digital tools and remote learning options, educators face both opportunities and challenges in adapting traditional syntax instruction methods to modern learning environments. This paper examines how digital tools and contemporary pedagogical approaches can enhance syntax instruction while addressing the evolving needs of 21st-century learners.

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered how students interact with language and linguistic concepts. Modern learners are increasingly accustomed to digital interfaces, interactive learning experiences, and immediate feedback mechanisms. This shift necessitates a reevaluation of traditional syntax teaching methods and the integration of digital tools that can support effective learning outcomes.

In the rapidly evolving landscape of education, the teaching of syntax-how words combine to form sentences has undergone a significant transformation. The digital age has brought about new tools, methods, and techniques that offer educators unprecedented opportunities to enhance their instruction and cater to the diverse needs of students. Understanding syntax is fundamental to language proficiency, and as language instruction shifts to accommodate the growing influence of technology, educators face the challenge of integrating digital tools into traditional methods of teaching. This integration is not just about adopting new gadgets or software; it involves a paradigm shift in how language and its structures are understood, taught, and learned.

Historically, the teaching of syntax was deeply rooted in textbook learning, rote memorization, and repetitive drills. Students would analyze sentence structures through mechanical exercises, dissecting grammar rules in a linear, formulaic manner. While these traditional approaches had their merits, they often failed to engage students in meaningful language learning experiences. With the rise of digital tools, the teaching of syntax can now move beyond static exercises, allowing for interactive, dynamic learning environments that encourage experimentation, collaboration, and critical thinking. The digital age provides both educators and students with access to a plethora of resources that were previously unavailable.

Digital tools such as language learning apps, syntax visualization software, and online grammar platforms have introduced new dimensions to language instruction. These tools enable educators to present syntax in more engaging, interactive ways, breaking down complex sentence structures into more digestible parts. Moreover, they allow for real-time feedback, which is crucial in helping students grasp the nuances of syntax as they practice and apply what they have learned. The immediate correction and adaptive learning offered by these tools help students to internalize grammatical patterns more effectively than traditional methods.

One of the significant advantages of teaching syntax in the digital age is the accessibility to authentic materials. Through the internet, students can be exposed to a variety of texts, spoken language, and multimedia resources in real-world contexts. These resources allow students to see how syntax operates outside of textbook examples, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-life language use. The integration of authentic materials

encourages learners to develop a deeper understanding of how syntax functions in different genres, registers, and communicative situations.

Additionally, the use of digital platforms has made language learning more collaborative. Tools like online discussion boards, shared documents, and virtual classrooms enable students to work together on syntactic analysis, offering each other feedback and insights. This collaborative approach mirrors real-world language use, where communication often involves interaction and negotiation of meaning. By engaging in such activities, students not only develop a better understanding of syntax but also hone their communicative competence, which is essential for language mastery.

Despite the many advantages, the digital age also presents certain challenges in teaching syntax. The sheer abundance of digital tools can be overwhelming for educators, making it difficult to select the most appropriate and effective ones for their classrooms. Furthermore, not all students have equal access to technology, creating a digital divide that can hinder equitable learning opportunities. Teachers must navigate these challenges carefully, ensuring that the use of technology enhances rather than detracts from the learning experience. This requires thoughtful integration of digital tools with traditional methods, as well as a focus on inclusivity.

Another critical challenge lies in ensuring that digital tools do not oversimplify the complexity of syntax. While many apps and programs offer convenient ways to learn grammar rules, they may not always promote a deep understanding of how syntax varies across different languages and contexts. Educators must strike a balance between using technology for efficiency and ensuring that students engage in the critical thinking necessary for true syntactic mastery. This requires a pedagogical approach that emphasizes both the technical aspects of syntax and its broader communicative functions.

Furthermore, the role of the educator has evolved in the digital age. Teachers are no longer mere transmitters of knowledge but facilitators of learning experiences. They must guide students through the process of discovering and applying syntactic principles, helping them to become independent learners capable of navigating the vast array of digital resources available. This shift demands that educators themselves be digitally literate, capable of selecting, adapting, and integrating digital tools in ways that align with their teaching objectives and the needs of their students.

As digital tools continue to evolve, so too will the methods for teaching syntax. Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and natural language processing hold the potential to further revolutionize language instruction. These technologies can analyze student performance on a granular level, offering personalized feedback and adaptive learning paths tailored to individual needs. In the future, we may see even more sophisticated digital tools that can simulate real-life linguistic environments, allowing students to practice and refine their syntactic skills in immersive, interactive settings.

The digital age presents both opportunities and challenges for the teaching of syntax. By embracing the possibilities offered by new technologies, educators can create more engaging, dynamic, and effective learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of their students. However, this requires careful consideration of how digital tools are integrated into the classroom, ensuring that they complement rather than replace traditional teaching methods. As educators continue to explore and refine these tools, the teaching of syntax will

likely continue to evolve, offering new pathways for students to develop language proficiency in an increasingly interconnected world.

Ultimately, the key to success in teaching syntax in the digital age lies in striking a balance between innovation and tradition. Educators must be willing to experiment with new tools and techniques while remaining grounded in sound pedagogical principles. By doing so, they can help their students navigate the complexities of syntax and become confident, competent communicators in any language. As we move forward, it is essential that we continue to explore how technology can enhance, rather than hinder, the teaching and learning of syntax, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed in an ever-changing linguistic landscape.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach, focusing on a comprehensive literature review to examine the effectiveness of digital tools and techniques in syntax instruction. A total of 25 peer-reviewed journal articles were analyzed, selected to provide diverse insights into the integration of digital tools in linguistic education and syntax teaching.

The selection process began by identifying 150 potential sources from academic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, Scencedirect, Sage Journals using keywords such as "syntax instruction," "digital pedagogy," "linguistic education," and "technology in language learning." The sources were then refined based on the following criteria:

1. **Relevance:** Articles that explicitly discussed digital tools or innovative teaching methods in syntax instruction were prioritized.
2. **Methodological Rigor:** Studies with clear research designs, robust methodologies, and well-supported findings were included.
3. **Recency:** Preference was given to works published within the last 10 years to reflect the latest practices and advancements.
4. **Contextual Fit:** Articles focusing on similar educational contexts, such as higher education and language instruction, were emphasized.

Abstracts and summaries of the 150 sources were reviewed to create a shortlist, which was further evaluated for alignment with the research questions and thematic focus. This process resulted in the final selection of 25 articles deemed most relevant and impactful for this study. By synthesizing findings from these 25 high-quality sources, the literature review offers a detailed exploration of the current landscape of syntax teaching in the digital age. This method ensures a robust foundation for discussing the transformative potential of digital tools in syntax instruction without relying on primary data collection.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of this study indicate that the use of digital tools in syntax instruction holds significant potential for enhancing language learning. Based on the literature review, various sources highlight that digital tools can help students grasp sentence structures more deeply, particularly through interactive features that traditional methods cannot provide. These tools, such as syntax visualization platforms and interactive grammar apps, allow students to break down complex syntactic forms into manageable parts, making abstract concepts more tangible and accessible. Studies have consistently shown that learners who engage with interactive

digital resources demonstrate a stronger command of syntactic rules compared to those who rely solely on textbook-based methods.

One of the key findings from the literature is the increased engagement and motivation among students when digital tools are integrated into syntax instruction. Several studies have emphasized the positive impact of gamification in language education, where game-like elements such as rewards, levels, and challenges are incorporated into learning activities. These gamified approaches not only enhance student participation but also foster greater retention of syntactic principles. For instance, research by Martinez and Lee (2024) demonstrated that students using gamified syntax lessons were more likely to retain complex grammatical rules than those taught through traditional lectures or exercises.

Furthermore, the literature reveals that digital tools allow for a more personalized learning experience, catering to individual student needs. Adaptive learning platforms, which adjust content based on student performance, have proven particularly effective in syntax instruction. Garrison and Moore (2023) found that students who used adaptive grammar tools showed significant improvement in their understanding of sentence structures, as the platforms provided targeted feedback and adjusted the difficulty of tasks in real-time. This personalized approach ensures that students are neither overwhelmed by difficult concepts nor under-stimulated by tasks that are too easy, promoting a balanced and efficient learning process.

Collaboration is another major theme identified in the literature. Digital platforms enable students to work together in virtual environments, sharing insights and feedback on syntactic analysis. Smith and Turner (2023) found that collaborative learning in digital spaces led to more meaningful engagement with syntax, as students benefited from peer feedback and the collective construction of knowledge. This social aspect of learning is particularly valuable in syntax instruction, where language use is inherently interactive and communicative. By working together, students are able to deepen their understanding of how syntax operates in various contexts and genres.

Another noteworthy finding is the role of multimedia elements in enhancing syntax instruction. Digital tools that incorporate visual and auditory components, such as video tutorials, animations, and audio explanations, have been found to significantly aid students in comprehending complex syntactic concepts. Studies suggest that multimedia elements cater to diverse learning styles, making syntax instruction more accessible to students who struggle with traditional text-heavy methods. For example, interactive diagrams that visually map sentence structures provide a dynamic way for students to analyze and understand relationships between syntactic components, reinforcing both comprehension and retention.

Furthermore, the role of structured strategies like lesson study-based learning management has proven effective in syntax instruction. As highlighted by Tosin, Sulistyaningsih, and Musyarofah (2023), lesson study integrates collaborative planning, implementation, and reflection to systematically enhance syntax learning outcomes. Their research demonstrated significant improvements in students' syntax comprehension and performance through structured cycles of planning, execution, and evaluation, underscoring the importance of reflective teaching practices in leveraging digital tools.

The literature highlights the potential of digital tools in supporting differentiated instruction for diverse learners. Syntax instruction often requires tailored approaches to accommodate varying levels of linguistic proficiency among students. Digital platforms with

customizable features allow educators to design tasks that align with individual learning needs, ensuring that all students—regardless of their starting point—can engage with and benefit from syntax instruction. This adaptability has proven particularly effective in multilingual classrooms, where students may possess varying degrees of familiarity with syntactic structures.

Discussion

The results of this study align with existing research on the potential benefits of using digital tools in syntax instruction, emphasizing their ability to enhance student engagement, comprehension, and retention of grammatical rules. As demonstrated in the findings, digital tools provide students with interactive and personalized learning experiences that traditional methods often lack. These tools, including syntax visualization platforms and adaptive learning systems, not only simplify complex syntactic structures but also foster a deeper understanding of sentence construction. However, while the findings point to substantial advantages, several challenges must be addressed to fully harness the potential of these digital resources in the classroom.

Despite these benefits, the literature also highlights several challenges associated with the use of digital tools in syntax instruction. One of the primary concerns is the risk of oversimplification. While digital tools can make learning more accessible, there is a danger that they may reduce the complexity of syntactic concepts to simple exercises or games, without encouraging deeper critical thinking. Liu and Wang (2023) warned that some digital platforms prioritize surface-level understanding over a more nuanced exploration of syntax, which could limit students' ability to apply grammatical rules in authentic language use.

Another challenge identified in the literature is the digital divide. Not all students have equal access to the technology required for digital language learning, which can create disparities in educational outcomes. This issue is particularly prevalent in under-resourced schools and rural areas, where access to reliable internet and devices may be limited. Johnson (2023) highlighted the importance of addressing these inequalities to ensure that all students benefit from the advancements in digital pedagogy. Without equitable access, the potential of digital tools to revolutionize syntax instruction may remain unrealized for many learners.

The literature also suggests that teacher training is a critical factor in the successful integration of digital tools in syntax teaching. Many educators are not fully equipped to navigate the vast array of digital resources available, which can result in suboptimal use of technology in the classroom. Richards (2022) emphasized that teachers need to be provided with sufficient training and support to effectively incorporate digital tools into their pedagogical practices. This includes not only technical training but also guidance on how to align digital tools with broader learning objectives and curriculum goals.

The role of artificial intelligence (AI) in syntax instruction is another area of growing interest in the literature. AI-powered tools are increasingly being used to provide personalized feedback, monitor student progress, and adapt learning paths based on individual performance. Chen and Roberts (2024) noted that AI can offer real-time analysis of student responses, allowing for immediate correction and reinforcement of syntactic rules. However, while AI holds great promise, the literature also raises ethical concerns about its use, particularly regarding data privacy and the potential for AI to replace human judgment in language education.

In terms of real-world applications, the literature emphasizes the importance of exposing students to authentic language materials through digital tools. By interacting with real-world texts, such as news articles, social media posts, and multimedia content, students can see how syntax functions in different communicative contexts. Watson (2023) argued that this contextualized approach helps bridge the gap between classroom learning and practical language use, allowing students to develop a more flexible and comprehensive understanding of syntax. Authentic materials also provide students with opportunities to explore variations in syntactic structures across different genres and registers.

Looking toward the future, the literature points to several emerging technologies that could further transform syntax instruction. Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are being explored as tools for immersive language learning experiences, allowing students to practice syntax in simulated environments. Kim and Park (2024) suggested that these technologies could provide students with new ways to engage with syntactic structures in real-time, offering a level of interactivity and immersion that traditional methods cannot match. While still in the experimental phase, VR and AR hold considerable potential for enhancing the teaching and learning of syntax.

In conclusion, the findings from this literature review underscore the transformative impact of digital tools on syntax instruction. Digital platforms offer a range of benefits, from increased engagement and personalized learning to enhanced collaboration and access to authentic materials. However, the challenges posed by technology, including issues of accessibility, oversimplification, and the need for teacher training, must be addressed to fully realize its potential. As digital tools continue to evolve, educators will need to remain adaptable, ensuring that these innovations are used to enrich, rather than replace, traditional methods of syntax teaching.

Ultimately, the integration of digital tools into syntax instruction represents a shift toward more dynamic, interactive, and learner-centered approaches. By embracing these technologies while maintaining a focus on pedagogical principles, educators can help students develop a deeper and more practical understanding of syntax. As the digital landscape continues to expand, the future of syntax teaching promises to be one of increased innovation and accessibility, providing students with new pathways to language mastery.

Additionally, it is evident that an integrated approach to teaching, combining innovative teaching strategies with active student participation, can significantly enhance student learning experiences. Further research could explore the long-term effects of these methods on student retention and overall academic performance. The role of digital tools and online platforms in facilitating learning should be considered, especially given their increasing relevance in modern education. Understanding how these technologies can be utilized effectively may provide valuable recommendations for educators looking to adapt to the evolving educational landscape. Overall, this study underscores the need for a continuous evaluation of teaching practices to ensure they remain aligned with student needs and learning objectives.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The integration of digital tools in syntax instruction has significantly transformed the way language is taught and learned. The literature reviewed demonstrates that digital platforms offer numerous benefits, including enhanced student engagement, personalized learning experiences, and increased opportunities for collaboration. Gamification, adaptive learning, and AI-powered tools have all proven effective in helping students grasp complex syntactic structures and apply them in various contexts.

However, challenges such as the digital divide, the risk of oversimplification, and the need for adequate teacher training highlight that the successful implementation of digital tools requires careful consideration and planning. Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the advantages offered by digital syntax instruction.

Moving forward, the continued development of emerging technologies like virtual reality and augmented reality offers exciting possibilities for even more immersive and interactive learning experiences. By balancing technological advancements with sound pedagogical practices, educators can create a more dynamic and inclusive environment for teaching syntax, ultimately fostering deeper linguistic understanding and practical language skills.

Suggestion

Based on the findings of this study, educators are encouraged to embrace digital tools thoughtfully and strategically to enhance syntax instruction. Rather than viewing technology as a replacement for traditional methods, it should be used as a complementary resource that enriches the learning experience. Teachers should experiment with interactive platforms, gamified learning tools, and adaptive technologies while ensuring that these tools align with curriculum goals and pedagogical principles. Such an approach can help students engage more deeply with syntactic concepts and develop practical language skills.

Institutions should prioritize providing equitable access to digital tools and resources, addressing the digital divide that remains a significant barrier in many educational contexts. By investing in affordable technology and reliable internet infrastructure, schools and policymakers can create more inclusive learning environments where all students can benefit from advancements in educational technology. Additionally, educators should receive continuous professional development to familiarize themselves with the latest digital tools and effective ways to integrate them into their teaching practices.

Future research should focus on exploring how emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and augmented reality can further transform syntax teaching. By simulating real-world linguistic contexts, these technologies have the potential to immerse students in authentic language use, enhancing both their theoretical understanding and practical application of syntax. Researchers and educators should also collaborate to develop frameworks that guide the integration of these tools, ensuring they are used ethically and effectively.

Ultimately, the integration of digital tools in syntax instruction requires careful planning, reflection, and evaluation. Educators must strike a balance between innovation and tradition, creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. By considering the diverse

needs of learners and continuously adapting teaching methods, syntax instruction can become more engaging, accessible, and effective for students in the digital age.

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