THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING AND LEARNING HINDI AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract. This article examines the role of digital technologies in teaching and learning Hindi as a foreign language. It considers how digital tools can support the development of listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, and Devanagari literacy. The study uses a qualitative, descriptive approach based on a review and thematic analysis of relevant research and established principles in technology-enhanced language learning. The analysis indicates that digital resources—including audio and video materials, online dictionaries, language-learning applications, virtual classrooms, and collaborative platforms—can increase access to authentic language input, provide flexible practice, and support learner autonomy. At the same time, their effectiveness depends on purposeful task design, teacher guidance, reliable access to technology, and attention to the specific linguistic features of Hindi. The article argues that digital technologies are most beneficial when integrated with communicative teaching methods rather than used as a replacement for teachers or meaningful interaction.

Keywords: Hindi language, digital technologies, foreign language teaching, language learning, Devanagari, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Digital technologies have become an important part of contemporary education. In foreign language classrooms, they provide opportunities to access authentic materials, communicate with speakers of the target language, and practise language skills beyond the limits of classroom time. These opportunities are particularly relevant to learners of Hindi, a language with a rich literary and cultural tradition and a writing system that may be unfamiliar to students whose first language uses the Latin or Cyrillic alphabet.

Learning Hindi involves more than memorising vocabulary and grammatical rules. Students need to develop the ability to recognise and produce Devanagari characters, understand pronunciation and word formation, interpret spoken and written texts, and communicate appropriately in different social contexts. Digital tools can make these learning tasks more accessible by combining written forms, sound, images, video, and interactive exercises.

However, technology alone does not guarantee successful language learning. Applications may encourage repetition without ensuring meaningful communication, while online materials can vary in accuracy and educational quality. Therefore, teachers need to select tools according to clear learning objectives and combine digital activities with structured instruction and interaction.

The aim of this article is to analyse how digital technologies can contribute to the teaching and learning of Hindi as a foreign language. It addresses three questions: (1) What types of digital resources can support Hindi language learning? (2) How can these resources contribute to the development of language skills and Devanagari literacy? (3) What challenges should teachers and learners consider when using them?

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2. Methods

This study follows a qualitative and descriptive research design. It is based on a focused review of academic literature on technology-enhanced language learning, computer-assisted language learning, and digital education, together with an analysis of the learning needs associated with Hindi as a foreign language. The purpose is not to measure the impact of a particular application through an experiment, but to identify educational opportunities and limitations that can inform classroom practice.

The materials were examined thematically. First, digital resources were grouped according to their main function: language input, skills practice, communication and collaboration, reference support, and assessment. Second, their possible contribution to listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary development, and Devanagari literacy was considered. Finally, recurring challenges—including learner motivation, digital access, the reliability of online content, and the need for teacher support—were identified. The analysis draws on established work in computer-assisted language learning and language-learning pedagogy, especially the importance of interaction, meaningful input, and learner autonomy.

3. Results

The analysis identifies several ways in which digital technologies can support Hindi language education.

3.1. Supporting listening and pronunciation. Audio recordings, podcasts, films, interviews, and short video clips expose learners to natural Hindi pronunciation, intonation, rhythm, and different speaking styles. Learners can replay difficult sections, slow down recordings where the platform allows it, and compare their own pronunciation with a model. Such activities are useful for recognising sound distinctions and becoming familiar with spoken Hindi.

3.2. Developing reading and Devanagari literacy. Digital flashcards, interactive alphabet exercises, typing tools, and graded online texts can help students recognise Devanagari characters and connect written forms with their sounds. Immediate feedback in character-recognition and reading activities can help learners identify errors. Digital texts also allow students to consult meanings and pronunciation while reading.

3.3. Expanding vocabulary and grammar practice. Online dictionaries, spaced-repetition flashcards, quizzes, and language-learning applications provide repeated practice with vocabulary and grammatical patterns. Learners can organise words by topic, review them at regular intervals, and encounter examples in context. These tools are most useful when students move beyond isolated translation and use new words in sentences and communicative tasks.

3.4. Encouraging speaking and interaction. Video-conferencing platforms, discussion forums, voice messages, and collaborative projects can create opportunities for learners to use Hindi for real purposes. Pair work conducted online may include introductions, interviews, role plays, and discussions of everyday situations. Interaction with proficient speakers, when available and appropriately supported, can also help learners develop communicative confidence.

3.5. Providing flexible feedback and assessment. Learning management systems and online quiz platforms can help teachers check comprehension, monitor task completion, and provide feedback. Digital portfolios can collect students' written work, recordings, and project outcomes over time. This makes progress more visible and can help teachers identify areas that require additional support.

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4. Discussion

The findings suggest that digital technologies can enrich Hindi language teaching by increasing the range and frequency of learning opportunities. Their value is not simply that they make lessons more modern or entertaining. Rather, they can connect different forms of language input and practice: learners may listen to a recording, read its transcript, look up unfamiliar vocabulary, and then respond orally or in writing. This integration can support a more complete learning experience.

An important consideration in Hindi instruction is the relationship between spoken language and the Devanagari writing system. Students who are new to the script may benefit from activities that combine character forms, sound, pronunciation, and meaning. Nevertheless, digital recognition exercises should be accompanied by opportunities to write characters and words independently. Otherwise, learners may become familiar with selecting correct answers without developing the ability to produce the script.

Digital resources can also promote learner autonomy. Students can choose suitable materials, repeat exercises, and study at a pace that meets their needs. This flexibility is valuable when learners have different levels of prior knowledge. However, autonomy should not be confused with learning without guidance. Teachers remain responsible for setting goals, evaluating the quality of resources, correcting persistent errors, and creating opportunities for meaningful communication.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, access to stable internet connections and suitable devices is not equal for all learners. Second, automated translation and speech-recognition systems may produce inaccurate or oversimplified feedback, particularly when context, pronunciation variation, or grammatical nuance is involved. Third, frequent notifications and unrelated online content may distract students. Finally, excessive reliance on gamified exercises can lead learners to focus on points and completion rather than communication. These challenges show why technology should be selected critically and integrated into a coherent teaching plan.

For classroom practice, teachers may use a blended sequence: introduce a language point in class, assign a short audio or video for independent study, provide a guided digital vocabulary or script activity, and then use class time for pair work, discussion, and feedback. In this model, technology extends learning while the teacher maintains an essential role in supporting accuracy, interaction, and motivation.

Conclusion

Digital technologies offer valuable opportunities for teaching and learning Hindi as a foreign language. They can provide access to authentic listening materials, support pronunciation and vocabulary practice, strengthen reading and Devanagari literacy, and create additional opportunities for communication and assessment. Their effectiveness, however, depends on careful selection, clear learning objectives, reliable content, and active teacher guidance. Digital tools should complement rather than replace classroom interaction and systematic language instruction. Future research could examine the effectiveness of specific digital activities with Hindi learners at different proficiency levels through classroom-based studies and learner feedback.

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