DEVELOPING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE THROUGH DIGITAL EDUCATIONAL PLATFORMS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Annotation: *The rapid integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has fundamentally reshaped English language pedagogy, shifting focus toward communicative competence within digital and intercultural contexts. This article explores how digital platforms—ranging from collaborative Web 2.0 tools like wikis and blogs to advanced artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR) systems—facilitate the acquisition of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies. Synthesizing recent empirical evidence, the study highlights that digital tools enhance learner motivation, reduce speaking anxiety, and provide exposure to authentic multicultural discourse. However, successful implementation remains contingent upon pedagogical intentionality and teacher digital literacy.*

Keywords: *Communicative Competence, Digital Educational Platforms, ELT, Artificial Intelligence, ICT-based Instruction, Intercultural Communication.*

Traditional English language teaching (ELT) often faced constraints regarding authentic language environments and individualized pacing. The

"digital revolution" in education has reconstituted this landscape, creating possibilities for immersive and globally connected learning (Urbaite, 2024). Communicative competence, a term traditionally encompassing linguistic and pragmatic skills, now increasingly demands intercultural sensitivity and digital adaptability (Frontiers, 2025). As digital platforms become central to instructional design, understanding their specific impact on learner outcomes is critical for systemic pedagogical reform.

To develop communicative competence effectively via digital platforms, we must look at how technology bridges the gap between linguistic knowledge and functional application. In 2026, the integration of AI, GIS-mapped environments, and collaborative networks has transformed ELT from a passive experience into an active, data-driven discipline.

Redefining Communicative Competence in the Digital Age

The traditional model (Canale & Swain) has been updated to reflect the "Digital-First" communication of the mid-2020s. It now consists of four primary pillars:

1. Digital Discourse Competence: The ability to handle various digital genres—from formal email threads to rapid-fire instant messaging and video conferencing.

2. Pragmatic Adaptability: Knowing when to use emojis or "netspeak" versus academic English, depending on the platform's social context.

3. Technological Strategic Competence: Using digital "scaffolding" (like real-time transcription or predictive text) to maintain a conversation without becoming over-reliant on the tool.

4. Information Literacy: Being able to synthesize, evaluate, and discuss English-language data retrieved from the web or AI agents.

Strategic Implementation of Digital Platforms

AI-Driven Oral Proficiency (Individualized Practice)

Modern platforms like Gemini Live or TalkPal serve as "low-stakes" interlocutors.

- Methodology: Students engage in Scaffolded Roleplay. For example, a student might be tasked with negotiating a research grant with an AI agent.
- Competence Developed: It builds *fluency* and *confidence*. Because the AI can provide immediate, private feedback on pronunciation and syntax, the "affective filter" (anxiety) is lowered before the student speaks with humans.

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

Digital platforms like Microsoft Teams and Slack allow for "Virtual Exchange" programs.

- Methodology: Students from different geographical regions work on a shared project (e.g., analyzing regional soil salinity or ecotourism impacts).
- Competence Developed: *Sociolinguistic competence*. Students must navigate different accents, cultural idioms, and time zones, forcing them to use English as a *lingua franca* for a functional purpose.

Gamified and Immersive Environments

Platforms like Gather.town or Roblox Education create "spatial" communication.

- Methodology: Students move an avatar through a virtual campus or laboratory. To progress, they must interact with others to solve puzzles or exchange information.
- Competence Developed: *Strategic competence*. The spatial element mimics real-world movement, making language use feel more "embodied" and situational rather than abstract.

The Role of the Educator as "Architect"

In this digital ecosystem, the teacher's role shifts from a source of knowledge to an Architect of Interaction.

- Designing "Information Gaps": Teachers use digital tools to give Student A one set of data (e.g., a map) and Student B another (e.g., a set of coordinates). They must use English to bridge the gap and complete the task.
- Data-Informed Feedback: Using platform analytics, teachers can identify specific "bottleneck" phrases or grammatical errors that a whole group is struggling with, allowing for targeted mini-lessons.
- Integrating Multimodality: Encouraging students to present their findings not just through text, but through video essays (Flip), digital maps (GIS), or podcasts, which requires mastery of different communicative modes.

Assessing Progress in 2026

Traditional testing is increasingly replaced by Performance-Based Digital Assessment:

Assessment Type	Digital Tool	Focus
Digital Portfolio	*Seesaw / LinkedIn*	Tracking the evolution of professional writing and peer interaction over time.
Simulated Interaction	*VR Labs*	Measuring the ability to handle high-pressure scenarios (e.g., a virtual scientific defense).
Peer-Review Cycles	*Canvas / Moodle*	Evaluating the student's ability to give constructive, linguistically accurate feedback to others.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

- The "AI Crutch": There is a risk that students may use Generative AI to produce perfect English without actually internalizing the language. Pedagogy must emphasize *live* interaction where AI cannot intervene.
- Digital Fatigue: Continuous screen time can lead to decreased engagement. Successful programs balance high-tech interaction with "flipped" models where digital preparation leads to offline, face-to-face discussion.

The efficacy of digital platforms is not solely due to the technology itself but the pedagogical framework in which they are embedded. The "novelty effect" may initially boost engagement, but long-term gains depend on the strategic alignment of tools with curricular objectives (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

Conclusion

While AI and machine learning offer personalized feedback, there is a risk that they may steer learners toward "transactional communication" that lacks cultural depth if not scaffolded by a teacher (Kern, 2024). Furthermore, the "digital divide" remains a challenge, as technical difficulties and connectivity issues in rural areas can hinder the equitable development of communicative competence (Dialnet, 2024).

Digital educational platforms significantly enhance communicative competence by providing exposure to diverse accents, reducing psychological barriers, and enabling personalized learning trajectories. When integrated thoughtfully, these tools prepare learners for real-world communication in a globalized, digital context. However, technology should serve as an enhancer of, rather than a replacement for, sound pedagogical practices.

For Educators: Prioritize "pedagogical intentionality" over technological novelty. Use digital tools to facilitate tasks that were impossible in traditional settings, such as global virtual exchanges (Urbaite, 2024).

For Institutions: Provide ongoing teacher training focused on digital literacy to ensure educators can effectively scaffold AI and multimedia resources.

For Developers: Focus on creating "low-bandwidth" versions of platforms to support learners in regions with limited infrastructure, ensuring broader access to digital learning (CyberLeninka, 2024).

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