

# **Investigating the Impacts of Digital Humanities on the Academic Performance of Second Language Teachers and Learners in Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro**

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## **Abstract**

*The present study seeks to find impacts of digital humanities on academic performances of students and teachers. The students and teachers, selected as participants of this study represent the second language learners of Institute of English Language and Literature (IELL), University of Sindh, Jamshoro. The study tries to investigate about the significance of digital humanities for second language learners in field of an academic research. The study explores an idea for the future research designs about new technical methods that can be introduced into field of academic research. Therefore, the objectives designed to find the impacts of digital humanities on second language learners are the investigation of role played by digital humanities in classroom and perceptions of students for it. The study follows qualitative method with content analysis of students and teachers' perceptions for digital humanities in classroom learning. The findings of this study have shown that there is a need to digitalize classroom learning. The teachers and students wanted to learn and teach with novice teaching methods with introduction of technological gadgets. According to them, this can facilitate learning environment more compared to traditional learning.*

**Keywords:** Digital Humanities, Technology, Second Language, Learning

## **1. Introduction**

Digital Humanities is concerned with the study of new techniques in research, education and inventions linked with digitalization of abilities in human beings. It is methodological in nature and interdisciplinary in scope. Basically, the concept of Digital Humanities is a new phenomenon that has been in academic research and practice for more than 20 years. It covers a large number of processes like investigation, analysis, production, presentation of new knowledge with collaboration of prior in electronic formats and disciplines. It is concerned with the study of technology and how this technology affects the ways or disciplines in which they are being used and the contribution of these disciplines into the knowledge of computing. In today's world, there



is hardly any individual that is not aware of Digital Technologies in research in daily life. According to Thacker (2011), the word 'Digital' directs our attention to a new medium of communication that has joined print, film, and television. It is a medium that includes artistic work along with other forms of textual production and exchange. This research aims to explore the significant use of digital technology in L2 classrooms at University of Sindh, Jamshoro. In today's world, hardly any institution is away from the use of digital technology that includes multimedia, laptops, iPods, smart phones, internet, online browsing, and online courses available on different websites. The major part of time is saved by online connections of students with their teachers with the technological gadgets. Gone are the days, when L2 learners and teachers needed the hand written diaries or black boards to teach and learn. Nowadays, the digital Humanities have replaced this trend with high usage of technological tools in daily life of L2 learners and teachers within L2 class rooms.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Digital Humanities is a new field that has gained an attention over all in the world. This study is based on the observations, extensive reading of different writers from different journals and websites, interviews and group discussions. Digital Humanities has three waves in different phases of time: The first wave was quantitative in its work, it was also mobilizing the research and making correct powers of database, it automated corpus linguistics, stacked hyper cards into critical analysis. The first wave arrived in the late 1900s and early 2000s and its main focus was on large scale digitization projects and establishment of technological infrastructure. It narrowly concentrated on text analysis within established disciplines. The second wave is Qualitative, it interprets, generates and experiential in characters. It emphasize on giving attention to complex things, historical contexts, analytical depth, critique and interpretation. It was mainly generative. It aims to produce new tools and ways to transform knowledge in technological way. This introduces entirely different disciplinary paradigms, fully focused fields, hybrid methodologies and new publication models of print culture. The third wave of Digital Humanities focuses was based on the grounded computability of the forms within a computational structure. In this wave the digital technology points out the mistakes that are formed in research projects and can cause the questioning of assumptions implicit in researches. It can be close reading, canon formation and etc.

### **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The present study aims to contribute in the field of technology that tries to explore impact of digital humanities on students and teachers in learning within L2 classrooms. The study will also try to present ways through which Digital Humanities can help them to acquire and teach language on the grounds of new technology.

### **1.3 Aims and Objectives of the Study**

This article aims to investigate about the impacts of Digital Humanities on learners and teachers of English Department in University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Present study also aids to know about the application of Digital Humanities in classrooms and learning of a second language. Digital Humanities is a field of new ways to produce and present knowledge in digital form. This study will focus on the academic use of Digital Humanities and its after effects on human abilities, especially on the students and teachers. The article also aims to find out the significance of digital humanities in education of University for students and teachers.

On the basis of above aims, the following objectives have been set.

1. To find out the role of Digital Humanities in teaching as a second language.
2. To investigate the perception of second language learners about the use of Digital Humanities in L2 classes.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What role do the Digital humanities play in teaching English?
2. What are the perceptions of students and teachers about DH in L2 class rooms?

## **2. Literature Review**

Selfe (1988) had explained about the Digital Humanities in ADE Bulletin. According to her the computers have been the part of our disciplinary lives for well over two decades. Now, in these present times, the DH has accumulated a robust professional apparatus that is probably more rooted in English Department. Moreover, she further tried to state that the field of DH has got a tremendous boost in last 2 decades and the computers are more rapidly replacing the traditional ways of learning and teaching for doing research in the academics. Similarly, Berry (2011) has expanded the vision of (Selfe, 1988). Berry (2011) contributed through scholarly research and came to a conclusion within study that the Digital technology is changing the ways of research, teaching and learning processes. Through DH research is mediated increasingly. Almost every person uses technological tools and instruments to collect new information or data about the concerned files of any type in environment. According to the findings of study, one cannot find a single academy that has more or less no any access to Digital Humanities as the vital part of their research domains. Empowering the digitalized academia, there are institutes and universities in foreign states that have been working on Digital Humanities. They have been arranging conferences to discuss the novelty of this concept and its usage within teaching and learning within academic settings. Kemp and Jones (2007) have given the example of organizations arranged to discuss various issues, trends and new challenges of Digital humanities. According to the example given by them, the academic conferences

have carried out to promote this new field in education. One of the great examples is *Digital Humanities Organizations*. It was *hosted* by many scholars and they attend this conference on Digital Humanities annually and *the University of Victoria* hosts the annual Digital Humanities Summer Institutes to train new scholars. Still, there are so many organizations that really wants to gain and transfer knowledge to facilitate learners. However, unfortunately, this practice is found to a negligible extent in Pakistan. It is because this domain has not been flourished in academic field. It needs to be discovered and attended. Garrett (2009) explained about the reason of spread of Digital Humanities. One of the reasons given by Garrett (2009) was that it basically began a term of consensus among a small group of scholars but now it is backed on a flourishing number of campuses by funding, infrastructure, and administrative commitments that would had been unthinkable even a decade ago. Blogs on the twitter, Facebook, Google, Wikipedia, and other such developed applications are used to accumulate and transfer knowledge overall in the world.

Gladney (2012) in his article “Long-Term Digital Preservation: a DH topic gave four areas of activity. It was the post by a UVA graduate student *Cheris Foster* that tried to define DH. The four areas of activity are:

1. Use of computational methods for research.
2. New media studies.
3. How technology reshapes the humanities classrooms.
4. How it reshapes scholarly communication and academic roles.

Kirschenbaum (2010) even defined the digital humanities that it is more similar towards the common procedural methods of outlook. It is rather an investment in one of the many specific sets of texts and utilizes different types of technologies. One can try to give an attempt to define “outlook”. It is quantitative use of various new techniques and tools that gave pioneer vision to digital humanities. The example of Voyeur is present. It is a tool that analysis texts and was developed by Sinclair. It helps to develop a complete list of different topics on frequencies for key terms and visualization of citations in papers.

## 2.1 Framework of the Study

The framework employed in this project is MA/MSc DH program. Jong (2017) work on program of Digital Humanities attracted many international cohorts of students that were primarily non-native speakers of English. The framework proved that the teaching practice in non-native English contexts is primarily taught through traditional methods and with the innovation of new techniques it has improved the learning and teaching strategies within classroom settings. The students in non-native context of English do speak different languages and offer different racial backgrounds. Therefore, in order to counter and deal systematically with these issues, the professional and educational past experiences

of students are taken into consideration. The study of Jong (2017) have shown that the number of students in Digital humanities have been looking towards novice technical skills compared to students that practice traditional mode of learning a language.

The following study will try to find experiences of students and teachers for digital humanities in non-native context of English. The majority of students and teachers are non-native speakers of English and they can even share different perceptions on digital humanities.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The research was conducted through an observance of cross-sectional process. It was to take samples from population that represented it. The selection of research methodology was based on the nature of questions that tried to explore the impact of Digital Humanities in teaching and learning of English as a second language within context of University of Sindh. It follows qualitative method. The qualitative method was taken to understand the grounded reasons, opinions, and motivations of learners and teachers to use Digital humanities in classrooms. This method even can help to find new trends in thoughts and opinions of students and teachers both with a deep study of the concept given.

### **4. Data collection Tool**

The data of this study was collected through ‘Semi-Structured Interviews’. Semi-structured interviews is the type of interview in which interviewer is not restricted to follow formalized list of questions. It is two way communications between interviewer and the interviewees; they both can ask questions to each other. In semi-structured interview, the candidate is more relaxed and confident due to conversational tone. It mainly follows the ‘open-ended questions’.

#### **4.1 Participants of the Study**

The participants for this project are the English teachers and students at Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro. The students selected were from the final year literature that have completed their course works and are now working on their thesis projects. The selected for this study were the permanent faculty members of IELL, University of Sindh.

#### **4.2 Sampling**

The sampling was done through collected random sampling. It was because the students and teachers in department were randomly selected to give their interviews on the topic. It was convenient for the researcher to collect data from the participants that were readily available for giving their views easily on the concept of digital humanities in learning and teaching within classroom contexts.

### 4.3 Procedure of Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process to analyze the collected data. This study follows the Procedure of 'Content Analysis of given statements by students and teachers through the interviews. Content analysis is a type of data analysis and is a technique used systematical to analyze the written, spoken, or visual communication. The content analysis is the systematic reading and observation of text; it is also called as 'thematic analyses'.

## 5. Discussions on Results

The data collected from students and teachers tends to state that they both favored Digital Humanities and its usage with in classrooms. However, following were the results that were received from the responses of students and teachers for the importance of Digital Humanities in classroom settings. The results tend to answer the two research questions of this study.

The first question of the study is:

### Q1. *What role do the Digital humanities play in teaching and learning of English in classrooms?*

The student No. three states that:

*"The concept of Digital Humanities is a new one that has a large impact on L2 classrooms. It also has an influence on learning and teaching of English that can be learnt more easily."*

It shows that the concept of Digital Humanities is a novice concept for the University students at IELL department in University of Sindh. It is because the University itself has not launched the concept of learning and teaching based on integration with technology.

The concept of Digital Humanities has been acknowledged with its benefits in many parts of World and in Pakistan. However, its application has not been witnessed with routine in academic settings. The student No 2 has remarked that:

*"The Digital humanities enhance critical thinking and critical abilities of a person. It can either within a teacher or a student because DH usage is frequently increasing in teaching and learning though the World with its vast benefits but yet has produced no such effects in learning and teaching contexts of Pakistan."*

One of the teacher, named as Teacher No 1, who teaches with the help of multimedia in classroom have somehow made a clear idea on use and benefit of Digital Humanities. According to the Teacher No 1 regarding benefit and acceptance of digital humanities in classroom states that:

*"About fifty years ago people did not have any genuine source to get knowledge about any language within the limited sources people taught and students learnt*

*second language by making exhausting efforts but today people are just one button away from knowledge.”*

This shows that teachers do accept the role of digital humanities within academic settings. Furthermore, the interview with one of the English teachers in department even let to know that now many teachers in department of English, University of Sindh, have taken initiatives to move their teaching style from traditional to modern and up to date techniques. The change from traditional to modern course of learning have helped learners to motivate them to learn without getting bore. The Teacher No 2 explains the entire scenario of teaching as:

*“Teachers most often use multimedia classrooms to motivate students and make them aware of new trends in teaching, they prefer digital instruments as these work effectively in classrooms. Teachers ask students to make Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups and Google applications like Pad let to reach students within a short span of time: they also teach through online courses and Skype classes to build students’ abilities of learning by using different technological tools that are projected only in English.”*

The overall discussion on role of digital humanities in department of English have shown that the student and teachers have considered DH a more accessible source of learning and teaching that can be easy and understandable.

The second question of the study states that:

## **Q2. What are the perceptions of students and teachers about DH in L2 class rooms?**

### **a. Teachers’ perceptions for DH in L2 classroom Settings:**

According to the Teacher No2:

*“The DH is more effective tool to teach in or out of the class-rooms.”*

It shows that the teachers do perceive DH an effective and operational tool in learning context. No doubt, through DH learners and teachers are interconnected to one another. This can prove as a great facilitator for teachers as they consider it helpful to keep in touch with the needs and problems of students in their learning.

Not only this, the teachers have been convinced that this era is the era of technology. Therefore, in order to keep students up to the mark, they need to make them aware of its usage and different applications concerned with it. It is a better source of knowledge that has paved various paths for students and even for teachers themselves to get data within short span of time. The Teacher No 1 has described the entire usage and different applications of Digital Humanities as:

*“As this is the era of English language and everything related to DH is in English too, so teaching English through DH is quite easier one. Digital humanities have*

*tremendously helped teachers to convey good bunch of knowledge through e-books, internet, Facebook pages, Google, Wikipedia, yahoo, and many other websites.”*

This has presented that the knowledge is shared in vast amount but that knowledge is summed up by teachers to propagate through proper medium in digital format without having problem of print scripts or heavy books and notes in hands.

**b. Students’ perceptions for DH in L2 classroom Settings:**

The concept of DH have played vital role specially in learning phase. It does enhance critical thinking and critical abilities in second language learning. Student No 3 states that:

*“Most of the text in linguistics and literature is present in digital format. Learning of second language through DH is quite time saving because DH usage is helpful in dynamic environment as L2 learning is somehow instinct but DH boosts up the skills to acquire it easily and frequently.”*

It has presented a view of the student that directly or indirectly the DH helps to learn language and content of the language. The need of DH cannot be denied at any learning context, specifically in second language learning. It is one of the best sources to create interest in learning of students. Nowadays, with the advancement of technology, the efforts are taken to introduce different technological gadgets within classroom contexts. It recalls the statement given by Student No 1 in an interview regarding the interest of students to learn through technology as:

*“DH is the platform to learn English language in class-rooms. Academic use of DH is helpful to increase motivation and interest within students to learn a second language. Fewer efforts are taken while learning a second language as audio-visual tools is implied to perform any task through DH is more impressive and quite effortless.”*

Although there are many other accessible sources, like cellphone, computers and internet that have made the learning much easier because everything is programmed in English.

## **6. Implications of the Study**

DH is a blessing in classrooms. The implications of this study from above findings can be propagated as:

1. Digital Humanities is a platform through which teachers can reach students and their mentality as it directly affects students mind and their psyche about learning of second language. The Noam Chomsky argued about Universal Grammar and some parameters that are fixed in human minds about learning a language; teachers also consider it as language learning is instinct but Digital tools and



technology boost up student's skills and enhances understanding and building up their capacities to cope up with the second language learning situation. Teaching through technology is much time saving and can be manipulated or reversed at any time but this technology has also forced people to be in touch with gadgets and computers for gaining the accurate use of any language.

2. There are multiple tools like online speech recognition and translations in form of English dictionaries. They have features of pronouncing the words for better implementations in general usage, computers that uses auto-correct feature to correct misspelled or wrong spelled words on the screen. In classrooms of universities, the use of Wi-Fi help teachers to bring best in the class for students by showing them videos on YouTube, audios for listening, tap records for speaking and writing on computers or personal mobile phones, gadgets, tablets and academic PCs. People learn through practice and exposure, like many individuals who are just literate till primary education can know how to operate any machine, computers, mobile phones because they get exposed to these and by using these tools they usually get to know few daily usage words in English and sometimes learning is frequent that they start to learn and imitate words that seems meaningful for a particular situation. DH is usable in any environment of learning because it makes space for its own importance.
3. Many of the teachers and students assume that DH enhances learning of second language with collaboration between learners and teachers through technology. Ideas are portrayed in second language through use of digital format is time saving that really became a crucial reason of DH or technology where one person is only one button away from the knowledge. Technology enhanced language learning is spreading throughout the world with a positive impact on both; teachers and learners.
4. English is language of industries, business, trade and economy. The Digital Humanities is the platform of it. It directly and indirectly tends to motivate students to learn through new ways and technological tools of this industrialized era.

## **7. Recommendations**

By finding the results and analyzing them thoroughly, the suggestions are made as under:

- a. There usage of digital technology shall be encouraged in institutions of Sindh. The individuals can acquire good bunch of knowledge in second language that helps them to make their second language learning easy and sustainable.
- b. The access of computers and internet must be provided in the classrooms. The Self Access Laboratories should be projected in the institutes that can ensure language learning. The teachers and students can use these technological tools freely for their better learning and practice.

- c. Teachers must be provided with a source of multimedia, computer and internet access in the classrooms so that the learning can be reached at its highest level.
- d. Students should be motivated to come forward and take part in this pool of technology enhanced language learning in and out of the classroom.
- e. Most often the people do negotiate on issues regarding the learning of English. It must be kept out of the class so that more reliably students and teachers build their environment with the help of technology in the ESL class.

## 8. Conclusion:

Digital Humanities is the field of technological tools and human abilities for learning, doing research and usage of computational methods in the academies. This article is aimed to investigate the main impacts and outcomes of using technological tools and computational methods in the classroom for language learning. Learning can be acquired anywhere with the help of new tools and instruments projected in the pool of technology. Learning of second language (English) has become more easy and reliable through DH as it helps teachers to be on the same page of teaching proper parameters of language with the help of digital humanities. The students do motivate with their learning of second language. DH simply makes learning and teaching mutual in the classrooms with collaboration of their efforts and practice in this new field. DH has become increasing investment of individuals worldwide for learning.

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