



Fostering Sustainable Teacher Competence Through Digital Assessment of Intercultural Oral Production in English as a Foreign Language: A DigCompEdu-Aligned Approach

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Abstract. This paper presents work in progress within the Erasmus+ project Second Language Learning at School for all TEENagers (SLS4Teens), developed under the EU Green Alliance. The study examines how Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can support the digital assessment of oral production while fostering intercultural communicative competence in secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Framed by the DigCompEdu framework and the Spanish LOMLOE curriculum, the research adopts a mixed-methods approach based on a questionnaire administered to nine in-service teachers. Findings reveal that ICT is predominantly used for content presentation and interactive activities, whereas its use for assessment and feedback remains limited. This gap suggests the need for targeted teacher training in digital assessment practices that integrate oral and intercultural competences. Furthermore, results indicate that teachers recognise the potential of learning situations as contexts for developing intercultural communication through ICT-mediated tasks. The study contributes to Education for Sustainable Development by promoting sustainable teacher competences aligned with DigCompEdu and supporting the development of students' communicative, digital, and intercultural skills, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

Keywords: digital competence, oral production, intercultural communication, assessment, Education for Sustainable Development.

1 Problem Outline and Research Question

1.1 Challenges in English as a Foreign Language Classrooms

Oral production is one of the most difficult skills for learners to master in English as a foreign language (EFL) classes. Even though curricula across Europe increasingly enhance communicative competence, the reality is that written and grammar-based methodologies still dominate the current panorama (Carballo, 2018, pp. 11-12). Teachers often highlight the challenges they face when designing and assessing oral activities in a systematic and effective manner. The issue becomes even more complex when teachers incorporate the intercultural factor into their lessons. This is due to the fact that traditional assessment tools are inadequate when learners are using English in an authentic intercultural context (Phongsirikul, 2018, p. 63).

1.2 The Role of Information and Communication Technologies

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers the possibility of recording, sharing, and assessing oral performances in the EFL classroom, shedding light on the process. The current digital era offers tools that can transform assessment from a tedious task into a more dynamic, authentic, and transparent process. This is the case of collaborative platforms (e.g. Padlet, Flip, Canva/Genially) and feedback applications (e.g. EdPuzzle, Classkick, Socrative). Nevertheless, according to the Digital Education Action Plan (2020) issued by the European Commission, teachers need to receive specific training on the matter. Otherwise, EFL teachers generally tend to use ICT to present content or to develop comprehension activities, leaving its potential for oral production underdeveloped.

In this context, ICT not only facilitates the assessment of oral production but also enables the creation of authentic communicative situations in which intercultural competence can be developed and evaluated.

1.3 Research Question

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre developed the DigCompEdu framework in 2017 to provide teachers with the necessary specific competences to exploit digital tools to enrich the teaching-learning process (Redecker, 2017, p. 8). Against this background, how can teacher training based on the DigCompEdu framework foster sustainable competences in assessing oral production and intercultural communication in EFL classrooms?

In this sense, the study adopts an integrated perspective in which digital assessment practices are understood as a means to simultaneously develop oral production and intercultural communicative competence through ICT.

2 Methodological Approach

2.1 Research Context and Participants

This study is integrated within the Erasmus+ project *Second Language Learning at School for all TEENagers* (SLS4Teens), which involves the participation of five EU Green Alliance institutions: the universities of Extremadura, Parma, Magdeburg, Angers, and Nantes. The project aims at improving the teaching-learning of languages using innovative methods of oral learning among other objectives. This paper only analyses data from the Spanish teachers participating in the project.

In this project, active teachers are trained in seven modules: the role of ICT; intercultural communication; neuroscience-based language teaching and learning; affective factors and motivation in the language classroom; exploring the teaching and learning of grammar; assessment of oral production; and Neuro-Linguistic Approach (NLA). There is a control group and an experimental group, with only the latter taking the NLA module training. One specific module focuses on the digital assessment of oral production, which constitutes the main focus of this paper, in connection with the development of intercultural communicative competence.

2.2 Data Collection

An online questionnaire was conducted among the nine Spanish teachers taking part in the project at the beginning of the training. There are five teachers in the experimental group, and four in the control group. The questionnaire is structured in five sections: teacher profile, communicative competence, learning situations, European and intercultural dimension, and professional development. For the aim of this paper, the focus will be on the second and fourth sections of the questionnaire created for the purpose of this study: communicative competence, and European and intercultural dimension.

The online questionnaire follows a mixed approach: closed questions for descriptive analysis and open questions for thematic analysis. This design allowed the collection of quantitative and qualitative data.

3 Key Findings

The second item in section two (communicative competence) analyses the use of ICT in the classroom as a teacher throughout the previous school year. Respondents had to choose from: presenting content, interactive activities, assessment and feedback, collaborative activities, promotion of oral skills, and research and information seeking. They were asked to indicate the purposes for which they use ICT in their teaching by selecting all applicable options (multiple-response format). Table 1 represents the number of teachers who selected each category.

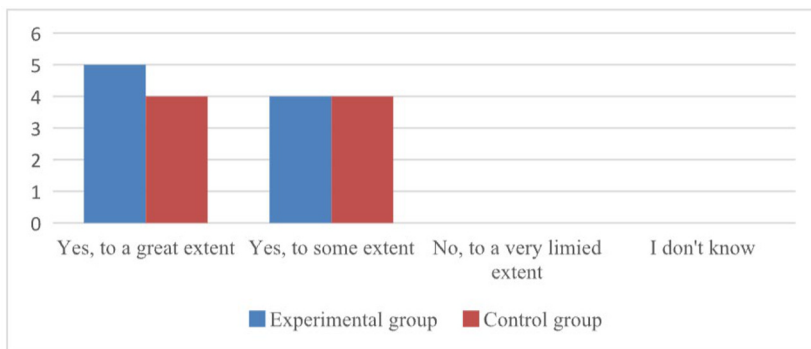
Table 1. ICT use categories reported by EFL teachers in the experimental and control groups.

ICT use category	Experimental group	Control group
Presenting content	5	4
Interactive activities	5	3
Assessment and feedback	3	2
Collaborative activities	5	3
Promotion of oral skills	3	3
Research and information seeking	3	1

Results indicate that ICT is most frequently associated with content presentation, interactive activities, and collaborative work in both groups. In contrast, fewer teachers reported using ICT for assessment and feedback, highlighting a gap between digital tool availability and their use for evaluating oral production. Although no substantial differences were identified between the experimental and control groups at this stage, the comparison remains relevant for future analysis, as only the experimental group has received additional training in NLA. Since these questionnaire data were collected during the initial phase of the training programme, any observed tendencies may reflect pre-existing teacher motivation or openness to innovation rather than training effects.

The underuse of ICT for assessment and feedback confirms the need to enhance teachers' Digital Competence in assessing oral skills, which is linked to the DigCompEdu framework.

In addition, responses related to intercultural competence (Fig. 1) suggest that teachers perceive learning situations as key contexts for its development. This is particularly relevant to the present study, as ICT-mediated tasks can create authentic communicative scenarios in which students engage with diverse cultural perspectives, thereby linking digital assessment practices with the development of intercultural communicative competence.

**Fig. 1.** Teachers' opinion on the development of intercultural competence through learning situations.

4 Connection to Education for Sustainability

This study contributes to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) by strengthening teachers' technological competences that are transferable and adaptable over time, allowing teachers to respond to changing digital and pedagogical needs. In addition, the focus on digital assessment of oral production supports the development of students' transversal skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and intercultural awareness, which extend beyond language learning. Finally, the project's European dimension, born in an international alliance of universities and schools, fosters professional collaboration and the creation of sustainable communities of practice. These elements align with Sustainable Development Goal #4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities for both teachers and learners.

5 Summary

In summary, this study provides preliminary evidence that, while ICT is frequently used in EFL classrooms, its potential for assessment and feedback remains underexploited. The initial findings suggest that teacher training can support more effective digital assessment practices, particularly in learning situations that foster oral production and intercultural communication. By linking ICT use with intercultural competence development, the study highlights the relevance of DigCompEdu as a framework for sustainable professional growth within European language education contexts.

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