# The Role of Technology in Teaching English to Young Learners: Perspectives from Private Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Murat Kaya

MA Student, International Burch University, Email: murat.kaya@stu.ibu.edu.ba

ORCID: 0009-0007-3767-9482

## Assist. Prof. Dr. Haris Delić

International Burch University, Email: haris.delic@ibu.edu.ba

ORCID: 0000-0002-8391-7660

**Abstract**

This study investigates the role of technology in teaching English to young learners in private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The research focuses on both the benefits and the challenges of using digital tools and language learning applications. A quantitative survey was conducted with 31 teachers and 180 students in Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bihać. The findings show that digital tools and apps increase student motivation, make lessons more interactive, and support vocabulary development. However, several challenges were reported, including unstable internet connections, limited teacher training, and the risk of distraction when technology is not guided properly. The results also showed regional differences, with students in Tuzla showing more positive attitudes than those in Bihać, and small gender differences in perceptions of digital learning. The study concludes that technology has strong potential to enrich English language learning, but it should be used together with traditional methods. In conclusion, this study informs schools and policymakers that better facilities and professional development opportunities should be provided for teachers to maximize the positive impact of technology in the classroom.

**Keywords:** technology in education, English language teaching, young learners, digital tools, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Introduction

In the 21st century, technology has become an important part of education. It has changed traditional teaching methods and created new opportunities for learning languages. Digital tools and language learning apps are especially popular because they make lessons more interactive, engaging, and flexible. These tools can help young learners improve motivation, focus better on class, and develop their language skills in different ways.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, many private schools have already started to use technology in their English classes. These schools often have better access to digital resources, which gives them the chance to try new teaching methods. However, the use of technology in classrooms is not always easy. Teachers sometimes face challenges such as weak internet connections, lack of training, and differences in students' access to devices. Another challenge is how to balance digital tools with traditional teaching, since both play an important role in learning.

This study aims to explore the role of technology in teaching English to young learners in private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It focuses on both the advantages and the challenges of using digital tools and apps. The study also looks at how students and teachers use these tools, as well as whether there are any gender or regional differences. As a result, it provides useful information that can help schools and policymakers improve English language teaching by technology.

**Literature Review**

Technology has become a key component in modern education, and its role in language learning has received increasing attention. Many researchers argue that digital tools can transform classrooms by providing interactive, personalized, and flexible opportunities for learning (Çetinavci, 2019; Stockwell, 2012). In the field of English language teaching (ELT), technology has been shown to increase student motivation, support independent practice, and allow teachers to design more creative lessons (Ghavifekr et al., 2016). Tools such as mobile applications, interactive whiteboards, and online platforms give learners the chance to practice language skills inside and outside the classroom.

One of the strongest advantages highlighted in previous studies is the effect of technology on motivation and engagement. Gamified language learning apps such as Duolingo or Babbel keep learners active through rewards, levels, and instant feedback (Reinders & White, 2016). Research

shows that these tools make lessons more enjoyable and encourage students to continue learning in their free time (Müller, 2020). Visual and interactive materials, especially for young learners, are effective for keeping attention and improving memory (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015).

Another important benefit is the support for vocabulary acquisition. Studies show that students learn and keep new words better when digital tools combine text, sound, and images (Burston, 2014; Blevins, 2014). Games and quizzes in mobile apps give learners the chance to repeat vocabulary in different contexts, which increases long-term retention. Çetinavci (2019) found that interactive apps allow children to progress at their own pace, making learning more personalized and effective.

However, technology also brings challenges. Teachers frequently report technical problems, unstable internet connections, and limited access to modern devices (Neumann, 2016; Özdamli & Cavus, 2011). Some researchers warn that too much reliance on digital tools may reduce face-to-face communication, which is essential for language development (Sykes, 2013; Thorne, 2013). Others emphasize that teachers need continuous professional development to use technology effectively (Marković, 2018). Without proper training, digital resources in classrooms may be ignored or misused. This can result in missed opportunities to improve student engagement and learning achievements. Educators must invest in professional development to successfully integrate technology into their methods of teaching.

Several regional studies highlight both the opportunities and difficulties of technology use in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mujkić and Đukanović (2018) reported that private schools with better resources often integrate interactive whiteboards and mobile apps successfully, to provide higher student motivation. Similarly, Šiljegović and Jovanović (2017) found that digital platforms allowed learners to review lessons and practice independently, which supported different learning styles. Nikolić and Rajić (2020) found that authentic online materials, such as recordings and videos, helped students to combine classroom learning with actual-life English use.

On the other hand, studies identify clear challenges. According to Hadžić and Pašić (2019), some

schools continue to have outdated equipment, poor facilities, and not enough technical support. These issues limit the potential for digital learning, even in private schools. According to Marković (2018), many teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are not well prepared to integrate technology, which causes disappointment and ineffective classroom practices. Knežević and Savić (2020) warned against over-reliance on apps and pointed out the need to balance digital and traditional methods to develop social and communication skills in young learners.

Research also shows that digital games and apps have a special impact on vocabulary development in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Mašić and Tarabar (2021) found a strong connection between video game use and English vocabulary development among young learners. Games allow students to learn new words, idioms, and expressions in real life situations. Husić (2019) reported that language learning apps were especially motivating for children because they made learning enjoyable and interactive. However, Jovanović (2020) reminded that apps cannot replace teacher guidance; they are most effective when used together with classroom instruction.

Overall, the literature highlights a double perspective. On one side, technology offers strong benefits for motivation, vocabulary, and independent practice. On the other side, technical barriers, unequal access, and insufficient teacher training remain major challenges. Private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina are showing positive results with technology integration, but differences between regions and schools suggest that progress is not parallel. These findings support the need for more research into both the advantages and difficulties of using digital tools in English language teaching.

This study builds on previous studies by focusing on young learners in Bosnian private schools. It investigates not only how technology increases engagement and learning but also difficulties such as technical limitations, teacher readiness, and regional differences. In this way, it brings a local perspective to the global conversation about technology in English language education.

**Methodology**

This study used a quantitative research method to explore the role of technology in teaching English to young learners in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Data were collected through structured surveys given to both teachers and students in three private schools located in Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Bihać. The aim was to find out how digital tools and language learning applications are used, what benefits they bring, and what challenges teachers and students experience.

**Participants:** The study included two groups of participants. The first group was made up of 31 English language teachers who worked with young learners aged 11–15. Teachers were selected from the three schools and represented different levels of teaching experience and both genders. The second group included 180 students from grades 7, 8, and 9. The student sample was balanced in terms of gender and region, with 60 participants from each city.

**Instruments and Procedures:** Two surveys were prepared; one for teachers and one for students. Both surveys used a 5-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The teacher survey focused on the advantages of digital tools, their impact on vocabulary acquisition, and the challenges of technology integration. The student survey explored their perceptive of digital tools compared to traditional methods, and the effects of apps on listening and speaking skills. Surveys were distributed electronically, and all participants completed them voluntarily.

**Data Analysis:** Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative tests. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated to identify patterns. In addition, t-tests and ANOVA were applied to explore possible differences between groups, such as gender and regional location. This analysis helped show how different participants think about the advantages and challenges of technology in English language learning.

**Results**

The results of the study showed both strong advantages and some challenges in the use of technology for English language learning in private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Teachers' Perspectives: Teachers reported that digital tools and apps had a clear positive impact on student motivation and classroom participation. They especially highlighted the role of visual and interactive materials in helping students learn new vocabulary. On average, teachers strongly agreed that apps and online platforms made lessons more interesting and supported long-term retention of language skills. Many also agreed that language learning apps improved students' listening and speaking skills.

However, teachers identified several difficulties. The most common problems were unstable internet connections, lack of reliable devices, and limited professional training. Some teachers also noted that not all digital tools fit the needs of different learning styles. Despite these issues, most teachers believed that the benefits of using technology outweighed the challenges.

Students' Perspectives: Students also showed positive attitudes toward technology. They stated that digital tools made English lessons more fun, more interactive, and more motivating than traditional methods. Many students felt they could practice English more independently and at their own pace when using apps and games.

When asked about language skills, students agreed that apps were useful for listening and speaking, especially because they gave immediate feedback and included different accents and pronunciation models. However, some students thought that digital tools were less effective compared to traditional classroom activities in helping them to remember what they learned.

Regional and Gender Differences: The results showed regional differences. Students in Tuzla had the most positive opinions about digital tools and apps, while students in Bihać were less excited.

Students from Sarajevo had opinions that fell between those of the Tuzla and Bihać groups. These differences could be explained by regional differences in facilities and teacher training.

Gender-based analysis showed no significant differences in how boys and girls rated language learning apps. However, boys had slightly more positive views about digital tools compared to girls. **Since the practical skill results were similar, it appears that gender influenced perspectives rather than the actual learning outcomes.**

**Table** **1**

*Teachers' Perceptions of Digital Tools and Apps*

| Variable | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Advantages of using digital tools and apps | 4.48 | 0.40 |
| Impact on vocabulary acquisition | 4.63 | 0.37 |
| Challenges of technology integration | 2.95 | 0.83 |

*Note: Scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).*

**Table** **2**

*Students' Perceptions of Digital Tools and Language Learning Apps*

| Variable | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Effectiveness of digital tools vs. traditional methods | 3.85 | 0.80 |
| Effects of language learning apps on listening and speaking | 3.65 | 0.92 |

*Note: Scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).*

**Discussion**

The findings of this study confirm that technology has an important role in teaching English to young learners in private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Both teachers and students reported that digital tools and apps increase motivation, make lessons more interactive, and support vocabulary learning. These results are parallel with international studies, which also highlight the motivational impact of technology and its positive effect on vocabulary acquisition (Plass, Homer, & Kinzer, 2015; Reinders & White, 2016).

One of the key results is that both teachers and students agreed on the benefits of digital tools for vocabulary development. This supports earlier studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina that showed a connection between apps and vocabulary development (Mašić & Tarabar, 2021). The p ositive opinions about motivation and classroom participation support Mujkić and Đukanović's (2018) findings that digital tools increase participation in Bosnian schools.

However, the study also highlights challenges. Teachers reported problems with internet access, devices, and lack of training. These difficulties have also been noted in other regional studies (Hadžić & Pašić, 2019; Marković, 2018). Although students were mostly positive, some of them felt that technology was less effective for long-term learning compared to traditional teaching. This finding suggests that while apps are useful, they cannot fully replace teacher guidance and classroom interaction. Similar warnings were made in previous research (Sykes, 2013; Thorne, 2013).

Regional differences in student opinions were another interesting outcome. Tuzla students had more positive views than those in Bihać, which could be the  reflection of differences in school resources and teacher preparation. This result is similar with Knežević and Savić (2020), who argued that the quality of access and training strongly effect the success of digital integration in Bosnian schools. Gender differences were small, and results show that boys and girls benefit

equally from technology. This suggests that the difference is more about attitudes than about real learning results.

In summary, the findings of this study support previous international and regional research, but they also add new ideas about private schools in Bosnia. The results indicate that technology works best when it supports traditional methods instead of replacing them. To benefit the most from digital tools, teachers need proper training, and schools need well technological equipment.

**Conclusion and Implications**

This study explored the role of technology in teaching English to young learners in private schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The results showed that digital tools and apps can increase student motivation, support vocabulary development, and make lessons more interactive. Teachers and students generally agreed on the positive impact of technology, especially in comparison with traditional teaching methods. However, the study also identified several challenges, such as unstable internet connections, limited teacher training, and the risk of distraction when technology is not guided properly.

One important finding of the study is that technology should not replace traditional teaching but should help to improve it. Teachers play an important role in guiding students and balancing digital resources with face-to-face communication. Schools should invest in professional development programs to help teachers use technology more effectively. Stable technological equipment, such as stable internet and access to modern devices, is also necessary to maximize the benefits of digital learning.

The study also found regional differences, which suggest that policymakers should give equal opportunities for technology and teacher training. Solving these inequalities could improve the quality of English education all around the country.

Finally, this research has some limitations. It focused only on private schools in three cities, so results cannot be generalized to all schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Future studies could include public schools, different age groups, and other methods such as classroom observations or interviews to provide a deeper understanding of how technology effects language learning.

In conclusion, technology has the potential to enrich English language teaching for young learners, but its success depends on proper support, training, and balanced integration with traditional methods.

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