

ADAPTING TRADITIONAL DIDACTIC DISCOURSE INTO DIGITAL ENGLISH TEACHING PRACTICES

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Abstract. This theoretical–empirical study examines how traditional didactic discourse can be adapted to digital English teaching. It aims to develop principles for designing structured, interactive, and goal-oriented EFL lessons using digital tools. Drawing on discourse analysis, communicative pedagogy, and digital learning theories, the study also analyzes teachers’ perceptions gathered through a structured questionnaire. The data reveal current practices, challenges, and needs in adapting instructional communication to virtual environments. The study ultimately proposes guidelines that preserve pedagogical clarity while leveraging the interactive possibilities of digital platforms.

Keywords: Didactic discourse, Digital environment, EFL, English teaching, Instructional communication, Lesson design, Digital pedagogy.

ADAPTAREA DISCURSULUI DIDACTIC TRADIȚIONAL LA PRACTICILE DIGITALE DE PREDARE A LIMBII ENGLEZE

Rezumat. Acest studiu teoretico–empiric examinează modul în care discursul didactic tradițional poate fi adaptat predării digitale a limbii engleze. Scopul său este de a dezvolta principii pentru proiectarea unor lecții de EFL structurate, interactive și orientate spre obiective, utilizând instrumente digitale. Bazându-se pe analiza discursului, pedagogia comunicativă și teoriile învățării digitale, studiul analizează percepțiile profesorilor colectate printr-un chestionar structurat. Datele evidențiază practicile actuale, provocările și necesitățile întâlnite în adaptarea comunicării instructive la mediile virtuale. În final, studiul propune ghiduri care mențin claritatea pedagogică, valorificând în același timp posibilitățile interactive ale platformelor digitale.

Cuvinte-cheie: discurs didactic, mediu digital, EFL, predarea limbii engleze, comunicare instructivă, proiectarea lecției, pedagogie digitală.

Introduction

The rapid integration of digital technologies into education has fundamentally transformed the way teachers communicate, organize, and deliver instruction. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, this shift from traditional classroom interaction to online and blended modes of teaching has redefined the nature of didactic discourse—the structured, goal-oriented communication through which knowledge is transmitted and learning is facilitated. Traditional didactic discourse, characterized by its clarity, sequence, and pedagogical intent, must now coexist with the multimodal, interactive, and dynamic features of digital environments. This transition challenges educators to preserve the instructional coherence of classical teaching while embracing the participatory affordances of digital platforms. Understanding how traditional didactic principles can be adapted to digital English teaching practices is therefore essential for ensuring that online instruction

remains both pedagogically effective and communicatively engaging. The present study addresses this need by exploring theoretical approaches and proposing guidelines for designing structured, interactive, and goal-oriented lessons that align with the realities of digital EFL education.

Research gap and relevance to EFL pedagogy lie in the limited theoretical investigation of how traditional didactic discourse is adapted to digital teaching contexts. Existing studies focus mainly on technological tools rather than on the transformation of instructional communication in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This study addresses that gap by linking classical didactic principles with digital pedagogy to support effective, structured, and interactive EFL teaching.

The research aim is to analyze how EFL teachers adapt traditional didactic discourse to digital teaching environments and to develop theoretical and practical guidelines based on their experiences and perceptions.

Research Objectives

1. to define the core features of traditional didactic discourse in EFL teaching.
2. to identify transformations in instructional communication within digital contexts.
3. to propose a set of theoretically grounded guidelines for effective digital EFL instruction.
4. to propose a model for designing effective digital didactic discourse for EFL instruction.

Methodology

The study employs a *theoretical–analytical research design*, focusing on the conceptual examination of how traditional didactic discourse can be adapted to digital English teaching practices. It draws on theoretical synthesis, comparative analysis, and critical interpretation of existing scholarly literature. *The empirical component* complements this foundation through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of EFL teachers' perceptions and experiences, gathered via an online questionnaire. *The data collection tool* consists of a structured questionnaire divided into four sections: teaching experience, digital tools used, perceived challenges, and strategies for adapting discourse. *The goal* is to develop a coherent theoretical model and to propose pedagogical guidelines grounded in contemporary theories of discourse and digital pedagogy.

Expected Results

- A theoretical model outlining the adaptation process of didactic discourse to digital EFL teaching.
- Evidence-based pedagogical guidelines for structuring interactive, goal-oriented digital lessons.
- Recommendations for teacher training programs in digital didactic communication.

Theoretical Framework

Didactic discourse refers to a structured and purposeful form of communication used in educational settings to facilitate learning, transmit knowledge, and guide understanding. It encompasses the teacher's verbal and non-verbal strategies, including explanation, questioning, clarification, and feedback, all of which serve to organize the flow of information and maintain learner engagement. Pedagogically, didactic discourse functions both as a medium of instruction and as a tool for cognitive development, helping learners construct meaning and connect new knowledge with prior experience. In EFL teaching, it plays a crucial role in modeling language use, shaping interaction, and scaffolding linguistic and communicative competence. Through its clarity, coherence, and goal orientation, didactic discourse ensures that learning remains intentional, interactive, and pedagogically effective.

According to C. Stan (2010), *didactic discourse represents the totality of processes involving the exchange of information and meanings between teachers and students who participate in an educational situation* [6]. Similarly, I. Albulescu (2006, p. 6) defines didactic discourse as *a special form of educational discourse whose final goal is the transfer and reception of knowledge—an interactive process through which information and meaning are exchanged between teachers and students within a given learning context* [1].

In the context of teaching activity, and implicitly of didactic communication, the didactic discourse is centered on the student as the recipient and beneficiary of knowledge. V. Dospinescu [2, p. 56] emphasizes that the student is the *subject of accomplishment*, a learner who, through the act of being invested with new knowledge, becomes a *competent subject*. The information provided by the teacher thus varies according to the student's level of understanding and feedback, since learners do not possess a constant receptive competence. An effective didactic discourse, therefore, fosters comprehension and engagement by aligning instructional delivery with the learners' evolving cognitive and linguistic needs.

Digital learning theories provide a foundation for understanding how didactic discourse evolves within technology-mediated environments. Constructivist and connectivist perspectives [5] suggest that learning in digital contexts occurs through active participation, collaboration, and interaction with diverse information networks. In this setting, didactic discourse expands beyond traditional verbal instruction to incorporate multimodal forms of communication—text, audio, video, visual symbols, and interactive elements—that together create richer and more dynamic learning experiences [4]. The multimodal dimension of digital instruction transforms the teacher's didactic role from transmitter of knowledge to designer of learning experiences, where clarity, coherence, and engagement are achieved through multiple semiotic channels. As Kopylova [3] notes,

digital technologies redefine the nature of didactic communication by fostering interactivity and learner autonomy, requiring educators to adapt their discourse strategies to align with digital affordances. Thus, multimodality becomes an essential feature of modern didactic discourse, ensuring that instructional messages are accessible, engaging, and pedagogically effective across varied digital platforms.

A questionnaire on *Adapting Traditional Didactic Discourse into Digital English Teaching Practices* was developed to collect data for this study. The purpose of the questionnaire was to explore how EFL teachers adapt traditional didactic discourse to digital teaching contexts, focusing on their experiences, strategies, and challenges in online instruction. The instrument was administered to 40 EFL teachers from different educational institutions across the Republic of Moldova, representing secondary education and various regions. Designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, the questionnaire aimed to identify current practices in digital pedagogy and the ways in which teachers modify instructional communication to suit virtual environments. The responses provided a valuable foundation for analyzing how didactic discourse is transformed within digital English teaching and for developing corresponding pedagogical guidelines.

The first question of the questionnaire addressed *teaching experience* and asked respondents, “How many years of experience do you have in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL)?” The multiple-choice options provided were: *less than 2 years*, *2–5 years*, *6–10 years*, and *more than 10 years*. This item aimed to establish the professional background of participants and to contextualize their perceptions and strategies regarding didactic discourse in digital teaching environments.

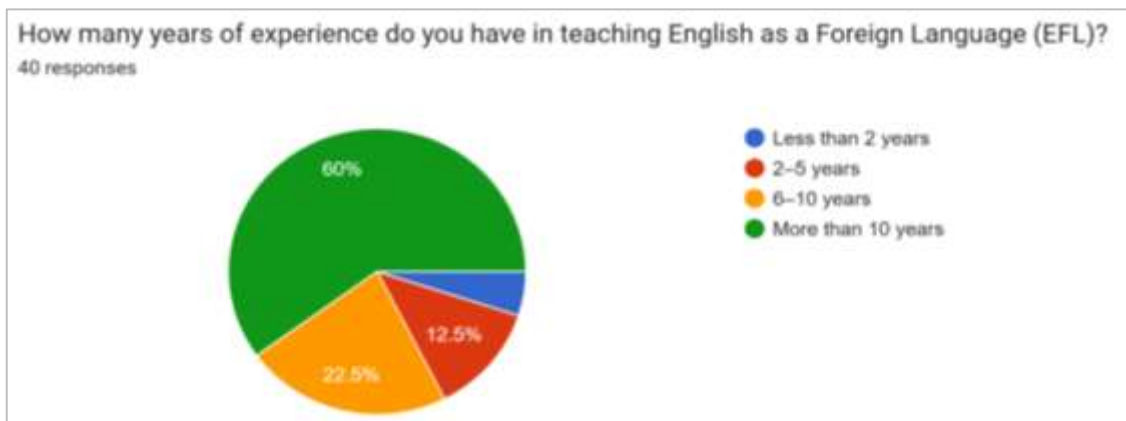


Figure 1. Teaching experience of respondents in EFL instruction

The responses indicate that the majority of participating teachers have extensive experience in teaching English as a Foreign Language. According to the results, 60% of respondents reported having more than 10 years of teaching experience, making this the largest group. A further 22.5% indicated 6–10 years of experience, while 12.5% reported 2–5 years. Only a small proportion, 5%, had less than 2 years of teaching experience.

The second question focused on the *digital tools used* in online English teaching and asked respondents: “Which digital platforms or tools do you use most frequently for teaching English online?” Participants could select multiple options from a list that included *Google Classroom, Moodle, Zoom or Google Meet, Kahoot! or Quizlet, and digital textbooks*, along with an *Other* category for specifying additional tools. This question was intended to identify the technological environment in which teachers conduct their lessons and to determine the range of digital resources that shape and support their didactic discourse in virtual EFL instruction.

The most frequently selected tool was Kahoot! or Quizlet, chosen by 29 teachers (72.5%), indicating that gamified and interactive platforms play a major role in digital EFL instruction. This was followed closely by Google Classroom, used by 26 teachers (65%), and Zoom or Google Meet, selected by 24 teachers (60%), reflecting strong reliance on learning management systems and videoconferencing tools for organizing and delivering online lessons. Digital textbooks were also widely used, indicated by 23 teachers (57.5%), suggesting that many teachers integrate structured digital course materials into their instruction. In contrast, Moodle was selected by only 4 teachers (10%), showing relatively low uptake among the participants.

In addition to the predefined choices, teachers listed a variety of other digital resources, albeit at much lower frequencies (each 2.5%). These included platforms such as Wordwall, LearningApps, Padlet, Quizzis, Socrative, Canva, British Council materials, BBC Learning English, and interactive educational platforms such as *educatieinteractiva.md*. Several teachers also mentioned YouTube, email, ChatGPT, and other multimedia or productivity tools, illustrating the diversity of supplementary digital aids used to enrich online teaching.

Overall, the results indicate that teachers rely heavily on interactive platforms, videoconferencing tools, and classroom management systems, while also incorporating a wide range of additional digital resources to support engagement and instructional communication in online EFL settings.

The third item addressed teachers’ perceptions of the importance of didactic discourse in digital learning environments. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement: “*Didactic discourse (structured communication used to teach and guide learning) remains essential in digital EFL teaching.*” Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 – Strongly disagree to 5 – Strongly agree. This item aimed to determine the extent to which teachers believe that the core features of instructional discourse—such as clarity, structure, and guided communication—continue to play a central role when teaching English in online formats.

The results indicate a strong consensus among respondents regarding the continued importance of didactic discourse in digital EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

instruction. A combined 87.5% of participants either *agree* (55%) or *strongly agree* (32.5%) that structured communication remains essential for guiding learning in online environments. This dominant positive response suggests that, despite the shift to digital platforms, teachers still view explicit instructional guidance as a crucial component of effective language learning.

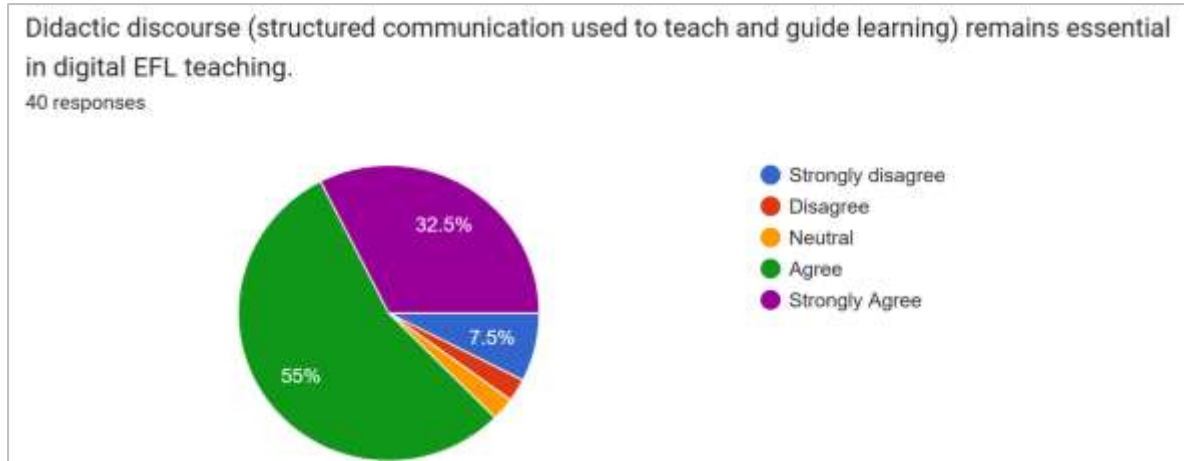


Figure 2. Importance of didactic discourse in digital EFL instruction

Only a very small minority expressed reservations: 7.5% reported *strong disagreement*, while 2.5% indicated *disagreement*. A similar proportion (2.5%) selected a *neutral* stance. These minimal levels of disagreement and neutrality reinforce the prevailing belief that digital teaching does not diminish the need for pedagogical structure.

Overall, the findings suggest that educators view didactic discourse as a foundational element that supports clarity, scaffolding, and learner engagement in digital EFL contexts. Rather than replacing traditional instructional practices, technology appears to necessitate maintaining — and perhaps even strengthening — structured communication to facilitate learning.

The fourth item examined the *strategies teachers use to adapt their instructional communication* to digital learning environments. Respondents were asked: “*What strategies do you use to adapt your instructional communication to digital environments?*” and were invited to select all applicable options. The checklist included the following strategies: *simplifying language and instructions, increasing the use of visuals and multimedia, providing more written feedback, encouraging interaction through chat or discussion forums, and using games or interactive activities*, along with an *Other* option that allowed participants to specify additional approaches. This item was designed to identify the practical methods teachers employ to maintain clarity, engagement, and pedagogical coherence when delivering didactic discourse in online EFL contexts.

The responses reveal that teachers employ a wide array of strategies to adjust their discourse for digital EFL instruction. The most frequently selected strategy was using games or interactive activities (90%), indicating a strong emphasis on maintaining learner

engagement and motivation in online environments. A large proportion of respondents also reported increasing the use of visuals and multimedia (75%), reflecting the need to support comprehension when physical classroom cues are absent. Additionally, clear, concise, and structured messaging was selected by 60% of participants, suggesting that digital platforms require more deliberate and simplified instructional language to prevent misunderstandings.

Moderate adoption was observed for authentic (native) online materials (42.5%) and recording short explanations or mini-lessons (27.5%), which may provide learners with additional opportunities for exposure and review. In contrast, providing more written feedback (22.5%) and encouraging interaction through chats or discussion forums (32.5%) were used less frequently, potentially due to increased teacher workload or learner participation challenges in asynchronous communication tools.

A small number of respondents included additional strategies under the “Other” option, such as using warm, supportive language and personalized check-ins to reduce the impersonal nature of digital learning environments. Collectively, these results demonstrate that teachers prioritize clarity, engagement, and multimodal support when adapting their instructional discourse to digital platforms.

The next section of the questionnaire included two open-ended questions designed to gather qualitative insights.

The first open question asked teachers: “*What are the main challenges you face when maintaining effective didactic discourse in digital English lessons?*” This item allowed respondents to elaborate freely on the instructional difficulties they encounter in online environments, including issues related to clarity of communication, student engagement, technological constraints, and the adaptation of traditional discourse strategies to digital formats. The question was intended to capture the nuanced, context-specific barriers that may not be fully reflected in closed-ended items, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the practical challenges involved in sustaining effective didactic discourse during digital EFL instruction.

The teachers’ responses reveal several dominant challenges in maintaining effective didactic discourse during digital English lessons. A recurrent theme concerns *student attention and engagement*, with many teachers noting that learners are easily distracted in online environments; as one respondent explained, “*Students may open other tabs, use their phones, or lose focus during longer online lessons.*” Another emphasized, “*It is difficult to keep students’ attention during online lessons,*” while others highlighted “*reduced student engagement*” and “*passive participation.*” Equally prominent was the issue of *limited nonverbal communication*, described by teachers as “*lack of facial expressions, gestures and classroom dynamics*” and “*difficult to read students’ reactions or misunderstandings because nonverbal cues are limited online.*”

Together, these comments show that teachers view effective digital didactic discourse as requiring a balance of *clear communication, multimodal support, technological competence, and intentional engagement strategies*.

The second open-ended item invited teachers to reflect on ways to enhance the clarity and interactivity of digital didactic discourse. The question asked: *“In your opinion, what could help teachers improve the clarity and interactivity of their digital didactic discourse?”* This prompt encouraged respondents to provide thoughtful suggestions based on their practical experience in online English instruction. Its purpose was to gather qualitative insights into the strategies, tools, and forms of professional support that teachers perceive as most beneficial for improving communication and learner engagement in digital environments.

Technical difficulties formed the most major issue. Respondents frequently cited *“poor internet connection,” “unstable Wi-Fi,” “electrical power issues,”* and *“insufficient digital equipment at school.”* Such problems interrupt communication and weaken lesson flow, making it harder for teachers to deliver clear instructional guidance. Teachers also mentioned *unequal participation* and the challenge of ensuring comprehension, noting that *“some learners dominate, while others remain silent or disengaged”* and that *“sometimes I’m unsure whether they truly understand the instructions.”*

Teachers repeatedly proposed the use of *concise instructions, visual support, and multimodal design*. As one teacher suggested, *“Teachers can improve clarity by giving short, simple instructions and using visuals or examples to support their explanations.”* Another emphasized the importance of active participation through *“quick questions, chat prompts, and regular comprehension checks.”* Many highlighted the value of *interactive digital tools*, recommending platforms such as *“Kahoot, Wordwall, LearningApps, Jamboard”* and *“polls, breakout rooms, and interactive whiteboards.”* Several respondents stressed the need for ongoing professional development, stating that improvement requires *“active and continuous learning,” “workshops,”* and training in *“using digital tools purposefully, not just technically.”*

To synthesize the theoretical insights and empirical findings of this study, a **conceptual model of didactic discourse adaptation** was developed. The model illustrates how traditional pedagogical communication evolves within digital English teaching environments, integrating elements of structure, technology, and interaction.

The proposed *Conceptual Model of Didactic Discourse Adaptation* illustrates how traditional forms of instructional communication evolve within digital EFL environments. It integrates three interconnected dimensions — *Pedagogical Structure, Digital Mediation,* and *Interactive Engagement* — each contributing to the transformation of teacher discourse from a traditional to a digital mode.

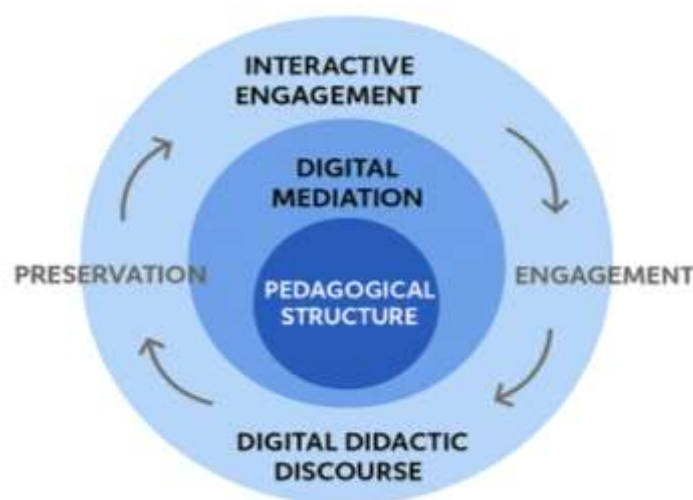


Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Didactic Discourse Adaptation in Digital EFL Teaching

Pedagogical Structure (Core of Traditional Didactic Discourse) represents the foundational elements of classical didactic discourse that ensure clarity, coherence, and goal orientation. It includes clear instructional objectives and structured content delivery, logical sequencing of information, and explicit explanation, modeling, and feedback mechanisms. These principles form the stable core that should be preserved in digital contexts to maintain pedagogical effectiveness and ensure that instructional communication remains purposeful and comprehensible.

Digital Mediation (Transformation Dimension) reflects the technological and multimodal shift that reshapes how didactic discourse is produced, transmitted, and perceived. It involves the integration of digital tools such as learning management systems (LMS), multimedia resources, and interactive applications; multimodal representation of content through text, visuals, audio, and video; and the use of both real-time and asynchronous communication modes. In addition, it includes the adaptation of teacher language to digital interfaces, emphasizing conciseness, visual referencing, and multimodal cues. Digital mediation acts as a transformative layer that modifies the delivery and reception of didactic messages without altering their instructional intent, enhancing both accessibility and engagement.

Interactive Engagement (Learner-Centered Dimension) emphasizes dialogue, participation, and collaboration as essential features of digital didactic discourse. It includes scaffolding learner interaction through discussion forums, chat tools, or digital feedback systems; encouraging learner autonomy and self-regulation; and using adaptive responses and personalized feedback to sustain engagement. Interactive engagement redefines the teacher's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator of learning, aligning with communicative and constructivist principles that prioritize learner involvement and active knowledge construction.

Overall, the adaptation of didactic discourse in digital EFL teaching leads to a redefined instructional model that integrates structure, technology, and interaction. This synthesis results in a digital didactic discourse that preserves the cognitive and organizational rigor of traditional pedagogy while leveraging the affordances of digital tools to promote engagement, collaboration, and learner autonomy.

Conclusions

The study shows that traditional didactic discourse remains essential in digital EFL teaching, providing structure, clarity, and coherence even when instruction shifts to online platforms. Teachers reported that maintaining effective discourse online is challenged by reduced nonverbal cues, fluctuating student engagement, and frequent technical issues such as “poor internet connection” and “unstable Wi-Fi.” At the same time, they actively adapt their communication by simplifying instructions, using visual support, and integrating interactive tools like Kahoot! and Wordwall.

The research connects classical definitions of didactic discourse with contemporary digital pedagogy, showing that while digital tools reshape delivery modes, the core instructional functions of didactic discourse remain unchanged. The conceptual model proposed—linking pedagogical structure, digital mediation, and interactive engagement—offers a framework for designing clear, multimodal, and participatory digital EFL lessons.

Future studies should examine learners’ perspectives on digital didactic discourse, investigate the impact of multimodal strategies on comprehension, and explore how teachers’ discourse practices evolve over time. Comparative and experimental research could further validate which specific discourse strategies most effectively enhance clarity and engagement in digital EFL environments.

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