THE FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH DIGITAL NATIVES : PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' READINESS

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Introduction

A THOUGHT-PROVOKING QUESTION

Have you ever seen toddlers absorbed in the digital media while travelling, eating or simply sitting?

background story of the research: some observations and interactions

family

schools

outdoor activities

shopping malls

When these young children have started formal education,

the evolution of the prevalent digital environments has triggered deep transformations in individual and social identities, particularly among Generation Alpha learners.

While senior teachers steer these changes, pre-service teachers usually experience a sharp cultural and social alienation when they move from Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs to school settings.

How about language teaching?

Language teaching methodology has evolved on its axis due to the improvements on the other academic disciplines.

So,

language teaching takes advantage of other fields and incorporate them into language teaching practices, including digital media. Besides, it adopts the term “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001) for the children who are born into this technological era.

Methodology

- a mixed method research design, using qualitative and quantitative data
- research tools such as reflective journals, learning logs and semi-structured interviews
- a Google form to elicit the views
- thirty practicum pre-service teachers appointed with convenience sampling method

Data analysis

Quantitative data analyzed with a statistical package program.

A thematic content analysis made to describe the conceptual framework of learner identity and teacher perception of this information.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS: CORE THEMES

Theme 1: "Digital natives“ (Prensky, 2001) from the teacher’s lens:

- Multimedia and Speed Choice
- Inter-Connected Cognitive Types
- Modern Communication Habits
- Innate or early -developed acquaintance with technology
- Preference of media-rich environments to text-rich resources

“Compared to my generation, I think they need more interactive, engaging and technology-integrated lesson designs”.

Theme 2: Digital Competence

- Contradictory Technological Competence
- The Legend of Tech-Driven Focus
- Weakness to Distraction
- “They are expert technology consumers for fun, but they often lack the digital skills for academic production and blindly rely on the first results on search engines”.

Theme 3: Digital literacy vs. focused attention

Speed conditioning

“I think digital natives expect everything to happen quickly. When you talk to them for a while, they just walk away”.

Attention span

“If an issue does not interest them within seconds, they change their focus elsewhere”.

Theme 4: Pedagogical Readiness & Challenges

Paper-based assessments fail to measure the digital research and multi-modal synthesis skills that define the actual literacy.

The main challenge is a rapid loss of engagement, as passive lecturing and long readings trigger immediate boredom in students accustomed to fast media stimulation.

Theme 5: Teacher Efficacy

- Professional belief

"Yes, I feel fairly confident, but I also believe I still need to improve my skills".

- Instructional balance

"I try to make lessons more student-centered and engaging rather than relying only on traditional methods".

"The goal is not to nurture with social media, but to use well-designed digital tools that keep their attention focused on learning objectives".

Theme 6: program evaluation

- Acquisiton of digital literacy skills for instructional design.
- Designing engaging instructional content.
- Familiarization with digital tools and online platforms to prepare teaching materials, presentations, and interactive activities.

Theme 7: classroom management and future projections

"I am sometimes worried that students may know more about technology than me".

"My main concern is keeping students focused without being too strict".

"I wish to establish an environment where they feel comfortable, but also respect classroom rules".

"I am planning to be familiar with new tools, especially AI applications, and use them to design better courses for my students".

CONCLUSION

Digital natives vs. traditional learners

- Preferred Learning and Communication Modalities
- Cognitive & Behavioral Speed
- Attention & Patience
- Curiosity & Independence
- Generational Contrast
- Technological Speed & Comfort
- Multimodal skills
- Non-linear thinking skills
- Quick and visually rich feedback
- Immediate access to information

IMPLICATIONS:

- **Assumption vs. fact:** There might be a gap between the assumption that natives would excel at technology and that familiarity does not automatically bring real digital literacy or successful academic use.

- **Educational Tech Consumption**: Digital tools like smart boards and educational games create fun and effortless learning; however, students may not actually engage with technology for formal learning.

- **Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy**: Familiarity and consumption do not breed critical thinking, which is required for educational purposes.

Implications

- Assessment should be conducted in line with the new generations' skills.
- School curricula should be redesigned in line with the needs.
- From passive digital consumers to active digital creators.
- Learners should be provided with tasks that require more concentration, patience and perseverance.

like this bird concentrating



like the water flowing



Thank you for listening

