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Digital Teaching Competence Regarding Foreign Languages and Learning Modes at Official Language Schools in Andalusia (Spain)

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Abstract: Despite the limited academic focus on the context of Official Language Schools (OLSs), these institutions play a crucial role in the formal education system, which are exclusively dedicated to foreign language teaching across various modalities in Andalusia, where ten different languages are taught. The main aim of this study is to perform an analysis the following two specific aspects: first, a descriptive analysis of the digital competence of 105 OLS teachers, and, second, a contrastive analysis examining potential differences in digital competence based on the language and teaching modalities (e.g., face-to-face vs. blended learning). This study uses the DigCompEdu framework to evaluate the digital skills of the teachers, revealing that, while they receive some training in digital competence, the overall level is only moderate, indicating a significant need for further professional development. Notably, the study highlights that the teachers' ability to convey the importance of digital tools for educational purposes is a crucial area, particularly in an environment where digital natives and immigrants coexist, presenting an intergenerational digital divide. The contrastive analysis shows no significant differences in digital competence based on language or modality, pointing to the lack of specialized training for blended learning teachers, who must rely heavily on technology in their work. This study suggests future research should focus on the digital competence of students, considering age as a potential influential factor in language learning, and recommends designing a tailored digital competence training plan for OLS teachers based on the DigCompEdu framework, which could benefit foreign language educators broadly.

Keywords: ICT; digital competence in teaching; DigCompEdu; language teaching; official language school

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1. Introduction

The relationship between technology and the teaching–learning process of foreign languages is a continuous and important source of innovation, and a fundamental object of study for language learning research [1]. However, the scientific literature in the field of foreign language didactics that focuses specifically on the classrooms of Official Language Schools is scarce, particularly when compared to the numerous studies conducted on formal education at the early childhood, primary, and secondary levels. Consequently, this remains a relatively underexplored area of research to date. Nevertheless, language

teaching stands out for its importance in any educational system. Proof of this is Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [2], which reads as follows:

> "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

On the other hand, at the national level, there are also legislative texts that regulate the teaching of languages, which is further proof that this subject has, in itself, sufficient weight to be included in the training offer within the regulated training in Spain.

The Organic Law 2/2006, of 3 May, on Education [3] also regulates language teaching, establishing that it shall be organized by Official Language Schools and adapted to the proficiency levels recommended by the Council of Europe.

Specifically, Organic Law 3/2020, of 29 December [4], contemplates the regulation of the teaching of foreign languages in Chapter VII of Title I, The Teaching and its Organization. Between Articles 59 and 62, this law includes aspects related to language teaching in terms of its organization, the function of the Official Language Schools, including their educational offerings and their teaching modalities, as well as their certifications and the correspondence of these degrees with others of the Spanish educational system.

Similarly, Andalusian regional legislation must be considered and mentioned, particularly Law 17/2007, of 10 December 2007, on Education in Andalusia [5], whose Chapter VII is also dedicated specifically to foreign language learning (Articles 101–103).

2. Theoretical Framework

This section provides an overview of the key concepts and contexts relevant to the study. It aims to establish the theoretical basis for understanding the role of Official Language Schools (OLSs) in the broader educational landscape.

2.1. Official Language Schools (OLSs) as an Educational Context

The OLSs are publicly owned centers dedicated exclusively to the teaching of languages and dependent on the educational administrations. Araujo [6] provided a brief review of the origin of these academic institutions, which have their beginning in 1911, in what the Escuela de Idiomas Jesús Maestro de Madrid is currently. At present, the OLS of Villacarrillo (Jaén) [7] defines them as "a vast network of non-university level centers dedicated to the specialized teaching of modern languages". They are centers dependent on the Ministries of Education of the different Autonomous Communities and are framed within the Special Regime Education (E.R.E.).

In Andalusia, the Escuela Oficial de Idiomas of Málaga [8] was the first to be established in the autonomous community in 1970, becoming a reference for the rest of the Andalusian OLSs, and the largest in terms of facilities, academic offerings, and teaching staff. In addition, depending on its capacity, the following languages are also taught: German, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish for foreigners, Modern Greek, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Russian.

Within the training offerings in the classroom modes, there are courses exclusively for the teaching staff of the public schools of the Junta de Andalucía (Regional Government of Andalusia, South Spain), especially those belonging to bilingual centers. These courses are called CAL (Language Update Courses by its acronym in Spanish) and are part of the Promotion of Plurilingualism Plan approved in 2005 by the Junta de Andalucía (Regional Government).

In addition to the general teaching offerings, some OLSs offer so-called courses for updating, improvement, and specialization in language skills.

The learning levels are divided into the following three levels, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) of the Council of Europe: basic (A1 and A2), intermediate (B1 and B2), and advanced (C1 and C2). In most Andalusian OLSs, each level is taught in two academic years, so that, in those schools that offer all levels of the same language, such as English in the OLS of Malaga, students, if they start from the lowest level, must take up to a total of eight academic years to complete the entire training offer up to the advanced C2 level.

Regarding the teaching modalities, the Department of Education and Sports of the Regional Government of Andalusia makes available to the needs of the citizenship the face-to-face, blended, and distance learning modalities in the educational offerings of the Official Language Schools. In the face-to-face modality, attendance is compulsory, and the students have two calls, both for promotion and for passing the certification test of the corresponding level. In total, face-to-face teaching is four and a half hours a week, except for the non-Romance languages, which, due to the characteristics involved in their study, in the lower levels, the timetable contemplates a total of six hours a week.

On the other hand, the semi-attendance and distance modalities are regulated in Decree 359/2001, of 7 December, on Initial Vocational Training, Adult Permanent Education, specialized languages and sports [9]. What differentiates this modality from the face-to-face one is that there is a part that is carried out telematically through a virtual platform, in which the online contents and the fora with the teaching staff are combined with a smaller face-to-face part, although it is also compulsory.

Finally, there are also many students who may choose exam-only enrollment as an external candidate instead of regular enrollment for courses and certification exams.

Regarding the student profile in this educational context, it is essential to highlight how intergenerational the classroom of an Official Language School is. The admission process begins at 16 years of age, meaning that, while most students are adults, there is a coexistence of digital natives and immigrants (including teachers). In this context, Palacios-Rodríguez et al. [10] describe a scenario where digital natives coexist with teachers, who experience a range of reactions to digital media, from bewilderment and admiration to rejection. In the specific educational context addressed here, this situation is further complicated by the intergenerational coexistence among students, which underscores the importance of teachers' ability to manage this diversity. Effectively addressing this diversity is, therefore, a crucial factor in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, a more precise understanding of the immigrant student profile, particularly in terms of their digital competences and challenges, is essential for ensuring inclusive and effective language education.

2.2. ICT Implementation, Digital Teaching Competence, and Differences Between Face-to-Face and Virtuality in the Language Classroom: The State of the Art

Educational research in the 21st century advocates for the relationship between technology and language teaching and learning, as evidenced by numerous studies over time, such as that of Murray [11] and Martínez-Soto [12], in which ICTs are considered as a facilitating factor in language learning, both native and foreign, while promoting a reflection on their use, so that their implementation can be productive for students. Looking further back in time, it becomes evident that technology has played a role in foreign language teaching since much earlier, with the emergence of the first language laboratories in the 1950s aimed at implementing the audio-lingual method in language instruction.

Digital media can serve to support both individual and cooperative work in the language classroom [13]. In fact, foreign languages stand out with regard to the incorporation

of technological resources in the academic field, as they boost interactivity, motivation, efficiency, and knowledge optimization in a flexible environment [14,15]. In this regard, Bernedo-Soto and Murillo-Ticona [16] also consider digital tools as a set of useful resources in the meaningful interaction between teachers and students, as they promote an effective and motivating environment in the processes of the learning and acquisition of a foreign language. Technology can be used to work on both the comprehension and production activities of the target language, create learning conditions beyond the conventional, and favor students' interests [17].

But the relationship between ICT and second language teaching means going beyond teaching with technologies. Implementing digital tools requires constant innovation, since these tools are increasingly sophisticated, and only a didactic use of them can really strengthen the language teaching–learning process [15,17].

Today, not using digital technologies in the classroom is unthinkable for a language teacher. There is an intimate relationship between technology and language teaching and learning that transcends the instrumental; therefore, showing, providing, and managing learning opportunities is a fundamental task of the 21st century teacher [1].

In view of this, digital teaching competence becomes indispensable. That is, it is a competence related to all of the skills, attitudes, and knowledge required by teachers in a digitalized world, i.e., a digital competence related to the use of ICT from a didactic–pedagogical perspective in a professional educational context, and, therefore, different in many aspects to those digital competences used in the domestic environment [18].

In this regard, training in digital competences for language teachers in general, and for teachers of Official Language Schools in Andalusia in particular, is considered essential. As noted by Cabero et al. [19], using the model offered by the DigCompEdu framework represents a paradigmatic example of digital teaching competence (DTC), outlining the competency areas that teachers should develop. A European Digital Competence Framework, published at the end of 2017 by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, better known as JRC for its acronym in English (Joint Research Centre), was created with scientific rigor in order to guide policies in this area, and to be able to be adapted to regional and national tools and training programs. The European Framework for Digital Competence of Teachers, DigCompEdu, is aimed at teachers at all levels of education, including those working in non-formal learning contexts. Its main objective is to be a general reference framework for developers of digital competence models in all member states. This framework is structured around 22 competences organized in 6 areas that will be further developed [20].

With regard to face-to-face classrooms, ICTs have also provided a large number of tools that have made this just one more educational alternative, since they enable the diversification of teaching strategies [21]. Studies, such as that of González-Medina et al. [22], show that hybrid, blended, or b-learning methodologies are an alternative to improve English language learning to complement and enhance learning, for example, of both receptive and productive oral skills.

However, the use of technologies in the distance learning of foreign languages can also present problems, as became evident with the compulsory use of these technologies during the lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Proof of this is the research carried out by Álvarez-Ramos et al. [23], which highlights the challenge in evaluation given the existing gaps due to connection errors or digital devices, and the influence of this to the work, for example, the oral skills mentioned above, which can even lead to a lack of interest and motivation on the part of students.

However, there is no doubt that training in digital competences, both on the part of teachers and students, allows for a better use of technologies in the teaching–learning

process, especially with regard to foreign language teaching, where a learning environment outside of the traditional classroom limits the face-to-face interaction of students with the teacher [16].

3. Objectives and Research Questions

This study is structured around the following two specific objectives: on the one hand, to assess, through a descriptive study, the level of digital competences of OLS teachers in Andalusia based on the model offered by the DigCompEdu framework; on the other hand, through a contrastive study, to examine whether there are significant differences in digital competence depending on the language and teaching modalities (face-to-face or blended). These objectives are intended to support the formulation of proposals to improve teaching processes in the aforementioned educational context, with special attention to their digitization processes.

From the objectives mentioned above, the following research questions (RQ) arise:

RQ1. Is there a significant difference in the level of digital competence based on the language taught by the teachers, considering that most studies on digital competence in foreign language teachers have traditionally been focused on English teachers?

RQ2. Does the level of this digital competence vary according to the teaching modality employed (face-to-face or blended learning) in the Official Language Schools of Andalusia?

4. Methodology

In accordance with the criteria established by Hernández et al. [24], it can be considered that this study has been carried out according to a quantitative methodology, with a descriptive and correlational approach. A quantitative methodology refers to a research strategy that focuses on numerical data collection and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and identify patterns. A descriptive approach aims to systematically characterize a phenomenon by detailing its components, frequencies, and distributions without establishing causal relationships. Meanwhile, a correlational approach examines the relationships between two or more variables to determine the degree and direction of association without manipulating them.

4.1. Participants

The convenience sample used for the data analysis consists of 105 active teachers from the 52 Andalusian Official Language Schools. This represents 13.41% of the total of language teachers in Andalusian OLSs, since, according to the data collected on its official website, the number of active teachers for the 2021/2022 academic year, when the data collection took place, was 783.

A convenience sampling approach was chosen due to the voluntary nature of the participation and the challenges associated with reaching the entire population of teachers. Despite this limitation, efforts were made to ensure the representativeness of the sample by including teachers from all 52 schools across the different geographical areas of Andalusia. Furthermore, the sample size (13.41% of the total population) provides a sufficiently large dataset for meaningful statistical analysis. While convenience sampling may introduce some degree of selection bias, the results remain reliable given the diverse representation of teachers and institutions. Additionally, this sampling method is commonly used in educational research when complete randomization is not feasible.

To conduct the contrastive study on the level of digital competence according to the language and modality taught, a convenience sample was used consisting of 54 English teachers, 30 French teachers, 13 German teachers, 2 Arabic teachers, 2 Spanish as a foreign language teachers, 1 Modern Greek teacher, 1 Italian teacher, 1 Japanese teacher, and

1 Portuguese teacher. Due to the nature of the sampling method, Russian teachers were not included in the study.

In terms of the modality used, 61 of the participants worked exclusively in the face-to-face modality, while 44 also worked in the blended or distance learning modalities.

4.2. Instrument

The instrument used for data collection was the DigCompEdu Check-In questionnaire, originally developed by the JRC, and translated, adapted, and validated to the Spanish context by Cabero-Almenara and Palacios-Rodríguez [18]. The main objective of this questionnaire is to identify the level of digital competence and to allow teachers to better understand the DigCompEdu framework, while providing them with a tool to self-assess their strengths and needs for areas of improvement in digital learning.

The instrument collected data from participants anonymously and was composed of a total of 67 questions, 22 of which belonged to the DigCompEdu competency areas, namely

- Professional engagement (D_A): understood as the ability of teachers to use digital competences for their professional interaction, and not only the improvement of teaching itself.
- Digital resources (D_B): refers to the competence to implement, locate, make good use of, and optimize digital resources and content.
- Digital pedagogy (D_C): relates to the competence to apply technology to teaching methodologies.
- Evaluation and feedback (D_D): refers to the use of digital tools to evaluate students and improve the existing processes for this purpose.
- Empowering students (D_E): refers to the promotion of student participation and learning through digital media, paying special attention to the individualities, interests, and needs of each student.
- Facilitation of digital competence to students (D_F): refers to transferring the management of digital competence for use as a citizen to the student.

The rest of the questions, 45 in total, were focused on understanding certain sociodemographic variables of the respondents in order to study, among others, the research objectives set out in this study.

For a correct interpretation of the data analyzed, it is necessary to take into account that the response interval ranged from 0 to 4 points. Therefore, as for the general statistical values, the mean value reached by the participating teachers in the whole instrument can be considered average (around the intermediate level B1), since it was 2.37, with a standard deviation of 0.56.

4.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

4.3.1. Reliability

The reliability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega coefficients, both overall and for each of its dimensions, and the results obtained are presented below (Table 1).

According to O'Dwyer and Bernauer [25], values greater than 0.7 indicate high levels of reliability for the questionnaire, both in terms of the instrument as a whole and in relation to the different subsections that comprise it.

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

	Cronbach's Alpha	McDonald's Omega
Professional engagement (D_A)	0.801	0.820
Digital resources (D_B)	0.876	0.818
Digital pedagogy (D_C)	0.898	0.816
Evaluation and feedback (D_D)	0.829	0.823
Student empowerment (D_E)	0.839	0.839
Facilitation of digital competence to students (D_F)	0.901	0.912
Total	0.979	0.987

4.3.2. Validity

Table 2 shows the obtained and reference values for the model fit according to Lévy Mangin et al. [26], including the Chi-square (CMIN), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), parsimonic goodness-of-fit index (PGFI), normalized fit index (NFI), and normalized parsimonic fit index (PNFI).

Table 2. Adjustment indices.

Index	Result	FIT
CMIN	382.128	CMIN < 500
GFI	0.979	GFI > 0.7
PGFI	0.786	PGFI > 0.7
NFI	0.926	NFI > 0.7
PNFI	0.806	PNFI > 0.7

Together, the Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Maximum Shared Variance (MSV) coefficients were calculated. Table 3 shows the results, as well as the reference values taken for the model fitting.

Table 3. Convergent and discriminant validity of the model.

Dimension	CR	FIT	AVE	FIT	MSV	FIT
Professional engagement (D_A)	0.789	CR > 0.7	0.642	CR > 0.5	0.552	MSV < AVE
Digital resources (D_B)	0.746		0.673		0.523	
Digital pedagogy (D_C)	0.864		0.69		0.562	
Evaluation and feedback (D_D)	0.858		0.684		0.418	
Student empowerment (D_E)	0.775		0.643		0.564	
Facilitation of digital competence to students (D_F)	0.859		0.679		0.405	

All of the figures obtained are in agreement with the reference values. Therefore, the reliability of the model (CR) as well as its convergent (AVE) and discriminant validity (MSV) are demonstrated.

5. Results

In this section, the findings of this research are presented in two main subsections. First, the descriptive results outline the dimensions in which the teachers demonstrate greater digital competence, using statistical indicators such as the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD). Second, the contrast analysis examines the differences in Teaching Digital Competence levels based on the language taught by the participant teachers and the teaching modality they use.

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

When ordering the results by dimensions from highest to lowest, it can be observed that the surveyed teachers exhibit the highest level of digital competence in Dimension A (Professional Commitment), with an average score of 2.66, and the lowest in Dimension F (Facilitating Students' Digital Competence), with an average of 1.87 points. Among the intermediate dimensions, ordered from highest to lowest level of digital competence, Dimension E (Empowering Learners) stands out with an average of 2.52 points, followed by Dimensions B, C, and D (Digital Resources, Digital Pedagogy, and Assessment and Feedback), with average scores of 2.45, 2.43, and 2.32 points, respectively.

A detailed analysis of the individual items within each dimension, as presented in Table 4, reveals that the highest levels of digital competence are found in the fourth item of Dimension A ("I participate in online training courses, such as university online courses, MOOCs, webinars..."), with an average of 3.13 points, the first item of Dimension E ("When proposing digital tasks, I consider and address potential challenges, such as equal access to digital devices and resources, compatibility issues, or students' low level of digital competence"), with an average of 2.97 points, and the second item of Dimension C ("I monitor the activities and interactions of my students in the online collaborative environments we use"), with an average of 2.77 points.

Table 4. General statistics.

	M	SD
D_A Professional Commitment	2.66	0.680
A1—I systematically use different digital channels to improve communication with students and peers.	2.60	0.688
A2—I use digital technologies to work with my peers inside and outside my educational organization.	2.22	0.930
A3—I actively develop my digital teaching competence.	2.68	0.956
A4—I participate in online training courses, such as university online courses, MOOCs, webinars...	3.13	0.991
D_B Digital Resources	2.45	0.689
B1—I use different websites and search strategies to find and select a wide range of digital resources.	2.59	0.805
B2—I create my own digital resources and modify existing ones to adapt them to my needs as a teacher.	2.55	1.083
B3—I protect sensitive content securely.	2.21	0.978
D_C Digital Pedagogy	2.43	0.709
C1—I carefully consider how, when, and why to use digital technologies so to ensure that their added value is exploited.	2.52	1.039
C2—I monitor the activities and interactions of my students in the online collaborative environments we use.	2.77	1.002
C3—When my students work in groups, they use digital technologies to acquire and document knowledge.	2.17	0.965
C4—I use digital technologies to enable students to plan, document, and assess their learning on their own.	2.26	0.910
D_D Evaluation and Feedback	2.32	0.700
D1—I use digital assessment strategies to monitor student progress.	2.25	0.875
D2—I analyze all available data to identify students who need additional support.	2.30	0.856
D3—Use of digital technologies to provide effective feedback.	2.40	0.894
D_E Empowering Students	2.52	0.755
E1—When proposing digital tasks, I consider and address potential challenges, such as equal access to digital devices and resources, compatibility issues, or students' low level of digital competence.	2.97	1.105
E2—Use of digital technologies to provide personalized learning opportunities for students.	2.10	1.097
E3—Use of digital technologies for students to actively participate in class.	2.49	0.709
D_F Facilitating Students' Digital Competence	1.87	0.702
F1—I teach students how to assess the reliability of information obtained online and to identify erroneous and/or biased content.	1.58	0.978
F2—I propose tasks that require students to use digital media to communicate and collaborate with each other or with an external audience.	1.84	0.867
F3—I propose assignments that require students to create digital content.	2.25	0.757
F4—I teach students how to behave safely and responsibly online.	1.49	1.030
F5—I encourage students to use digital technologies creatively to solve concrete problems.	2.18	0.864
Teaching Digital Competence_Total	2.37	0.559

Conversely, the items with the lowest levels of digital competence are all located within Dimension F, which is consistent with the overall results for the dimension. Specifically, items F4 ("I teach students how to behave safely and responsibly online"), F1 ("I teach students how to assess the reliability of information obtained online and identify erroneous and/or biased content"), and F2 ("I propose tasks that require students to use digital media to communicate and collaborate with each other or with an external audience") present the lowest levels of Teaching Digital Competence, with average scores of 1.49, 1.58, and 1.84 points, respectively.

5.2. Contrast Analysis

In this section, the aim is to find statistically significant differences with respect to the level of Teaching Digital Competence as a function of language and the modality taught. The non-parametric contrast statistics of H Kruskal–Wallis (language) and Mann–Whitney U are applied. Previously, it has been verified that the sample maintains a non-normal distribution by performing kurtosis analysis and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (Sig. = 0.000).

The results of the contrast analysis with the "language" variable can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. Teaching Digital Competence contrast with the variable "language".

	D_A	D_B	D_C	D_D	D_E	D_F	Teaching Digital Competence_Total
Kruskal–Wallis H	14.414	4.543	8.205	13.324	6.353	12.767	9.290
df	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Sig.	0.072	0.805	0.414	0.101	0.608	0.120	0.318

As can be seen, no value is significant (Sig. > 0.05), so it can be affirmed that there are no statistically significant differences with respect to the level of Teaching Digital Competence (total and by dimensions) depending on the language taught.

Finally, Table 6 presents the results of the contrast analysis with the "modality" variable.

Table 6. Teaching Digital Competence contrast with the variable "modality".

	D_A	D_B	D_C	D_D	D_E	D_F	Teaching Digital Competence_Total
Mann–Whitney U	1186.000	1194.000	1329.500	1293.500	1218.500	1163.500	1255.000
W for Wilcoxon	3077.000	2184.000	2319.500	3184.500	2208.500	2153.500	2245.000
Z	−1.021	−0.976	−0.082	−0.319	−0.811	−1.167	−0.565
Sig.	0.307	0.329	0.935	0.749	0.417	0.243	0.572

Again, no value is significant (Sig. > 0.05). It is affirmed that there are no statistically significant differences with respect to the level of Teaching Digital Competence (total and by dimensions) as a function of the modality taught.

6. Conclusions

The main aim of this study was to analyze the Teaching Digital Competence (TDC) of Official Language School teachers in Andalusia (Southern Spain). For this purpose, the DigCompEdu framework was used in order to evaluate their skills and potential differences among them based on their teaching language as well as their teaching modality.

As a starting point, the questionnaire's reliability and validity were found to be high, confirming the robustness of the results. This allows the findings to be compared with

other related studies, such as that of Romero Tena et al. [27], where the model offered by the DigCompEdu framework is also considered a stable instrument for assessing teachers' digital competence. From this foundation, several key conclusions are drawn.

Firstly, while teachers do receive training in digital competence, this training is found to be insufficient. The overall results of the study indicate that the level of digital competence is moderate across the board. This suggests a clear need for further digital competence training among all teachers at Official Language Schools in Andalusia [14,17]. The moderate levels of competence revealed in the study reflect the ongoing challenge faced by educators in integrating technology effectively into their teaching practices. This is not uncommon in many educational contexts, where digital literacy remains a critical gap to address, especially considering the rapid pace of technological advancements and the evolving demands of digital education.

When analyzing the specific dimensions of digital competence, one notable aspect is the ability of teachers to convey the importance of digital media for educational purposes to their students. This is particularly relevant in the context of Official Language Schools, where both digital natives and digital immigrants coexist, and where there is an evident intergenerational digital divide. In this context, equipping teachers with the skills to bridge this gap is especially critical [10,20]. The intergenerational digital divide can present significant challenges in terms of how technology is perceived and utilized by different generations of teachers and students. This underscores the need for targeted professional development programs that not only focus on improving teachers' technical skills but also emphasize the pedagogical strategies required to make the most of digital tools in the classroom. Therefore, teacher training should include a strong focus on the integration of digital media in teaching methodologies, as well as fostering digital literacy in students.

Furthermore, the contrastive study reveals that there are no significant differences in digital competence levels when considering the language and the teaching modality variables given the sample particularities, such as the sample size or the unequal number of groups of teachers. This leads us to affirm the lack of specific training for teachers of the blended learning modality, for whom the use of technology is a sine qua non requirement to be able to perform their professional work [28]. This finding highlights a gap in professional development programs, where teachers working in blended or hybrid learning environments may not be receiving the specialized support necessary to adapt to these modalities. It is crucial that future training initiatives address the specific needs of blended learning environments, equipping teachers with the necessary digital tools and pedagogical strategies to engage students effectively in both face-to-face and online contexts. The lack of training in this area could have implications for the effectiveness of blended learning as a teaching model, especially as it becomes increasingly prevalent in education systems worldwide.

In terms of the application of these findings, there are several potential avenues for improvement in teacher training and curriculum development. First, the study suggests the urgent need for a comprehensive, framework-based training program tailored to the specific needs of teachers in Official Language Schools. Utilizing the DigCompEdu framework could provide a structured approach to improving teachers' digital competence, ensuring that training is aligned with established standards and best practices in digital education. Moreover, integrating the DigCompEdu framework into national or regional teacher certification programs could serve as a significant step towards professionalizing digital competence in foreign language education.

As future lines of research, two key proposals emerge. First, it is recommended to study the digital competence levels of students in Official Language Schools and explore whether variables such as age play a significant role in the process of foreign language learning.

Understanding the digital competence levels of students would offer valuable insights into how technological tools and digital media can enhance or hinder their learning experiences, providing a more holistic view of digital competence in language education. Additionally, investigating the role of age as a variable could shed light on generational differences in the adoption of digital tools for language learning, informing future educational policies and strategies. Second, the design of an ad hoc training plan on digital competence for teachers, based on the DigCompEdu framework, is suggested as a crucial step for improving the overall quality of digital teaching in foreign language education. This tailored training plan would serve as a valuable resource for the educational community, particularly for foreign language teachers. By aligning teacher training with the DigCompEdu framework, educators can acquire the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the increasingly digital nature of teaching and learning, ultimately enhancing the quality of the education delivered to students in the digital age.

Briefly, this study highlights the need for further professional development in digital competence for teachers, particularly in the context of Official Language Schools in Andalusia. By addressing the gaps in digital competence training and utilizing frameworks like DigCompEdu, educators can be better prepared to meet the demands of digital education and ensure that students are equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

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