

Harnessing Media Technologies in Overcoming Barriers in English First Additional Language for Intermediate Phase Learners

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Abstract

The teaching of English First Additional Language (EFAL) in the Intermediate Phase presents persistent challenges, particularly during learners' transition from the Foundation Phase. Integrating modern media technologies into the curriculum offers potential solutions to support both teachers and learners during this critical stage. This study examines how media technologies can be utilized to overcome barriers in EFAL teaching and learning, particularly in resource-constrained and rural school contexts. A qualitative research design was adopted, using purposive sampling to select 16 participants with lived experiences in EFAL instruction. Data collection included semi-structured face-to-face interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and a review of teaching and learning documents to support triangulation. Findings reveal that teachers' awareness and use of media technologies are limited, primarily restricted to laptops, smartphones, and smart TVs. Few participants referenced the pedagogical value of audio, visual, or audio-visual media. The study also highlights a lack of strategic prioritization by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in promoting the integration of media technology, particularly in rural schools. The study recommends targeted teacher training programmes that encompass a broad spectrum of media tools. Furthermore, investment in infrastructure, which includes reliable Wi-Fi access and learner devices, is essential. Developing strong policy frameworks, offering ongoing professional development workshops, and fostering collaborative learning environments are also necessary to enhance EFAL instruction through media technology integration.

Keywords: Curriculum integration, English First Additional Language (EFAL), Intermediate phase learners, Media technology

1. Introduction

The emergence of technology in different phases of our lives has significantly transformed our society. This has also critically impacted teaching and learning across the education sector. Ghansah (2025) This study brings a fresh perspective by focusing on the lived experiences of teachers who integrate everyday media tools, such as videos, radio clips, and interactive applications into EFAL instruction. It contributes new understanding by showing how these tools can be adapted to address contextual challenges including limited English exposure, low learner motivation, and restricted support beyond the classroom. Thus, in the modern educational landscape, media technology has become an essential tool in enhancing the teaching and learning experience, particularly for English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in the intermediate phase (source). The transition from mother-tongue instruction in the Foundation Phase to English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in the Intermediate Phase presents significant challenges. These challenges include learners struggling with limited vocabulary, comprehension difficulties, and low engagement due to self-esteem issues. These barriers hinder their language acquisition and overall academic progress as English proficiency is crucial for understanding other subjects.

However, with the integration of media technologies, such as interactive software, audio-visual aids, and digital platforms, which offer innovative solutions to these challenges, learners can learn and perform better (sources). Research by (Maja, 2023), highlights the need for modern technical tools to update the educational system and better prepare learners for the information age. Similarly, Ventouris, Panourgia and Hodge (2021) emphasize that teachers' perceptions of technology's value play a critical role in its successful integration. The COVID-19 pandemic further underscored the importance of digital tools in education, as teachers were compelled to adopt new pedagogical practices to reach learners remotely. Despite these global insights, limited studies have focused specifically on EFAL instruction within rural South African intermediate phase classrooms. This creates a gap that the present study addresses by exploring the integration of media technologies from the perspectives of both EFAL teachers and Heads of Department. Including these two groups provides a broader and more holistic understanding of the structural, pedagogical, and contextual constraints shaping media technology use.

Against this backdrop, this paper explores how media technologies can alleviate common barriers in EFAL instruction. The main aim of this study is to ascertain how these technologies address issues such as limited resources, lack of learner motivation, and difficulties in pronunciation and vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, it will show how media technology promotes learner autonomy by providing access to language resources beyond the classroom. Thus, the goal is to highlight the potential of media technology to transform EFAL

instruction, making it more interactive, inclusive, and effective, thereby improving language proficiency and overall academic success for intermediate phase learners. This study will be guided by the following research objectives:

1. To identify types of media technology suitable for EFAL instruction
2. To explore how can teachers integrate these technologies into their pedagogical practice
3. To examine how such tools can alleviate teaching and learning difficulties

2. Literature Review

Studies on EFAL have been conducted in many contexts worldwide. The literature used in this paper presents a broad picture of how media technologies can support EFAL teaching and learning in the Intermediate Phase. Many scholars agree that media technologies help address several barriers faced by teachers and learners. The Global System for Mobile Communications Association GSMA, (2010) describes mobile learning as the ability to access educational tools and materials anytime and anywhere through connected devices. This benefits teachers through improved access to modern teaching strategies. It also exposes learners to global digital environments. add that digital resources provide important linguistic and cultural input. Katemba (2020) explains that technology removes time and space limitations. When learners have access to devices, learning can continue at any time. This availability increases motivation and encourages learners to use media tools to seek information and interact with peers. Similarly, Harvil (2018) highlights the language-learning advantages of technology, yet few studies critically assess how these tools function when teachers have minimal training or limited connectivity. Digital tools offer visual and text-based support that helps learners improve vocabulary and reduce spelling errors. Harvil also notes that repeated audio input improves listening and speaking. Pronunciation is a common barrier for EFAL learners, and many teachers struggle to correct it. Media technology can help address this challenge. Accordingly, De Jager, Rwodzi and Mpofu (2020) observe that learners spend much of their time on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. These platforms can therefore be used for EFAL instruction. Many learners own smart devices, although they mostly use them for entertainment. Munje and Jita (2020) argue that if the Department of Basic Education (DBE) equips schools with devices and trains teachers, technology integration becomes easier. Teachers can then direct learners to use their devices for homework, research, and vocabulary building. The literature also discusses the emotional and motivational challenges that EFAL learners face. Many learners lack confidence because they cannot express themselves in the target language. This leads to low participation and poor academic performance. Charamba (2021) report that computers support collaborative learning and help learners work more independently. Mngwengwe and Dlamini (2020) note that social media tools are easy to use. They allow quick uploads, expand learning time, and help teachers manage large classes. These features can motivate both teachers and learners. They also support stronger integration of media technologies in EFAL instruction.

Policy and pedagogical issues also appear in the literature de Jager (2022) found that although CAPS does not mention the use of social media in EFAL, some teachers share online resources with learners. This practice has produced positive outcomes. However, media technologies often require a shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered teaching, which some teachers find difficult. Qolamani and Mohammed (2023) explain that media tools develop learner autonomy and confidence. Another emphasis on the beneficial use of media technology in classroom is echoed by (Ariantini, Suwastini, Adnyani, Dantes, & Jayantini, 2021) who show that platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram support information sharing. Learners use these platforms to connect with global communities and improve their understanding of EFAL structures. Garlinska, Osial, Proniewska and Pregowska (2023) argue that technology allows learners to continue learning without the physical presence of a teacher. It also helps learners adapt to digital environments. In support of the use of media technology in EFAL instruction, Rahayu and Wirza (2020) opine that technology exposes learners to diverse learning resources and helps them participate in lessons with native speakers. Hazarika (2017) adds that technology encourages positive attitudes and communication in the target language. It increases motivation, engagement, autonomy, and overall mastery. It also improves teacher–learner interaction inside and outside the classroom.

The literature also highlights barriers to technology use. Rural schools experience many challenges. These include a lack of training for teachers, weak infrastructure, and a shortage of devices. On the same breath, (Chisango, 2019) report that rural schools struggle with poor connectivity, unreliable electricity, and limited ICT skills. Teachers' attitudes also influence technology use. To further stress the importance strengthening the integration of media technology, (Lekgothoane, 2021) identifies slow policy implementation and limited digital resources as major barriers. The COVID-19 pandemic pushed schools to adopt e-learning. However, this happened at a basic level. Since then, the DBE has been encouraged to improve digital support and training for teachers. AlSaied and Akhtar (2021) argues that ICT tools such as computers, the internet, mobile phones, television, and online applications make learning more attractive and effective. This study concludes that the literature indicates that media technologies offer numerous benefits for EFAL teaching and learning. They improve access to resources, strengthen vocabulary and pronunciation, increase motivation, and support collaboration and autonomy. However, the literature also reveals several gaps. Very few studies focus on EFAL instruction in rural South African Intermediate Phase classrooms. Existing research also pays little attention to how EFAL teachers and Heads of Department understand, access, and use media technologies in these settings. This is a significant gap because these practitioners directly shape classroom practices and curriculum implementation. The significance of this study lies in its focus on their lived experiences. By examining their perspectives, the study provides context-specific insights that can guide DBE policy, support targeted teacher training, and improve the effective use of media technologies in EFAL classrooms.

This study therefore addresses two central gaps in the literature:

Contextual gap – Most existing research generalizes technology integration from global EFL settings, without accounting for the unique socio-linguistic and infrastructural realities of EFAL classrooms in South Africa.

Pedagogical gap – Few studies have critically examined how specific media technologies (e.g., audio, visual, or interactive platforms) can address concrete EFAL challenges such as pronunciation, vocabulary development, and learner motivation.

By situating media technology integration within EFAL intermediate phase classrooms, this paper adds a nuanced understanding of how teachers interpret, adapt, and implement digital tools under constrained conditions. In doing so, it moves beyond descriptive accounts of technology use and offers a context-sensitive analysis of its pedagogical potential.

3. Research Methodology

The study adopted the interpretive qualitative approach because it sought to obtain data from participants' own experiences about the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell and Creswell (2017) viewed qualitative research as an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. According to Lune and Berg (2018), the aims of qualitative research are to reveal the meaning of an occurrence for people who are involved in it. This approach pursues an understanding of people's interpretations in a natural context. In conducting a study qualitatively, researchers are concerned with identifying how people describe their own experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences Tisdell, Merriam and Stuckey-Peyrot (2025). Tisdell et al. (2025) in support of Creswell (2017) aver that the qualitative study aims to understand the experiences that people have.

The adoption of the interpretive paradigm provided an in-depth understanding of the realities of the phenomenon through exploring participants' experiences, making use of various data collection instruments, which were triangulated to yield credible research findings. Moreover, the adoption of the interpretive paradigm provided an in-depth understanding of the realities of the phenomenon through exploring participants' experiences, making use of various data collection instruments, which were triangulated to yield credible research findings. The data collecting instruments included, among others, non-participatory classroom observations, document analysis, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews, the first two instruments intended to corroborate the responses of the interviews for credible data at the end. However, the focus of this presentation will be on the data collected through face-to-face interviews. Additionally, interpretive research is heavily influenced by phenomenology, phenomenologist studies human experiences as it lived, this is according to Hammersley (2023). According to Naz, Gulab and Aslam (2022), the usage of semi-structured interviews is preferred over standardized interview because it allows the interviewer to explore the opinions and ideas of the interviewees, as well as probe deeper into their answers for additional information and clarification, especially when dealing with complex or sensitive subject matter. While interviewers are at liberty to change the words used in the questions, they cannot alter the meaning of the questions, since words can have different meanings for different participants. The legitimacy and reliability of questions in semi-structured interviews do not depend upon the repetition of words, but rather the equivalence of their meaning. If the interviewer can convey the same meaning to different interviewees, then the answers can be standardized and compared.

Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in the vicinity of the Esikhaleni circuit, which falls under the King Cetshwayo District in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Four primary schools and twelve EFAL teachers were purposively sampled for this research. The target population for this study consisted of EFAL teachers in the intermediate phase, basically because they receive learners from the foundation phase, where the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is the mother tongue. In the intermediate phase, they transition to the English LoLT; therefore, they are deemed the most suitable participants. Purposive sampling was used to select the EFAL teaching criterion for the selection of the participants. Effective sampling was preceded by a well-detailed sampling plan as stated by Polit and Beck (2021), that a sampling plan is a formal plan specifying a sampling method, a sample size, and a procedure for recruiting participants. Therefore, purposive sampling was used to select participants who are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information as a way of identifying and selecting cases that will use limited research resources effectively.

Based on Palinkas (2022) perspective that purposive sampling moves away from any random form of sampling. It is a crucial strategy to use and ensure that specific kinds of cases of those that could be included are part of the final sample. From this sampling type, intermediate phase teachers were selected from the four public schools who routinely integrate media technology into their lessons. These participants were chosen based on their relevant experience and active engagement with digital tools in EFAL instruction. To strengthen methodological rigor, the study ensured that the chosen qualitative interpretive design aligned directly with the aim of exploring teachers' lived experiences with media technologies. This alignment enhances the credibility and coherence of the methodological approach.

Data collection procedures

All pre-data collection arrangements were made by the University of Zululand (UZ) Research Ethics Committee requirements. This preparatory stage ensured that participants were well-informed and available, allowing data collection to proceed as planned. The study employed a qualitative approach, using semi-structured face-to-face interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis as the primary data generation methods. (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Before interviews commenced, participants were fully briefed on the purpose and procedures of the study, and informed consent was obtained. Each participant was assured of the voluntary nature of their participation and their right to withdraw at any point. The targeted participants included intermediate phase teachers, specifically

those teaching Grade 4 English First Additional Language (EFAL), as well as Heads of Department (HoDs), given their supervisory roles in monitoring the integration of media technologies in the classroom.

Efforts were made to create a comfortable and non-threatening interview environment to encourage openness and honest responses. This is consistent with Risan, Binder and Milne (2018) view that establishing rapport is essential in qualitative interviewing. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility, and the use of probing questions enabled the researcher to elicit deeper insights and more nuanced understandings (Ahlin, 2019). Interviews lasted between 45 to 60 minutes, depending on the depth of the discussion and the extent of follow-up questions. Interview venues were arranged in advance in collaboration with school management to ensure a quiet, distraction-free environment conducive to effective dialogue. The interview schedule, observation checklist, and document review guide were cross-checked by two experts in language education to verify content relevance and clarity. Their feedback ensured that the instruments adequately captured issues related to EFAL barriers and media technology integration. Several strategies were employed to minimize research bias. Member checking was conducted at multiple stages, allowing participants to review their responses for accuracy (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Triangulation was achieved by using interviews, observations, and document analysis, which reduced dependency on a single data source and strengthened the dependability of the findings. Reflexive notes were kept throughout data collection to ensure that the researcher continuously evaluated how personal assumptions might influence interpretation.

Data analysis

All data were analysed through thematic analysis, following an inductive coding process. The recorded audios for the interviews were transcribed and given to the participants to validate. Thereafter, the transcripts were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006) procedures. These procedures involve, among other things analysing, identifying, and reporting patterns in qualitative data research. The breakdown process includes familiarization with data. This means reading the data for a clear understanding of its content. Generating initial codes, this systematically coding interesting features of the data to develop key concepts. Searching for themes, these will be broader patterns between the initial codes. Reviewing themes, will ensure that themes represent what the study objectives seek to achieve. Defining and naming themes means a clear definition for each theme. Finally, reporting, these will be findings with identified themes and their interpretations. This study followed this data analysis procedure to come up with plausible findings. This thematic analysis allowed the researcher to explore subjective viewpoints and gather in-depth information of participant’s experiences about the phenomenon.

Below is the biographical information of the participants who voluntarily participated in this study:

Table 1. Biographical information of the participants

Participant	School	Gender	Age range	Years of experience
T1	School1	Female	25-30	5
T2	School 1	Male	35-40	12
T1	School 2	Female	25-40	13
T2	School 2	Male	35-40	13
T1	School 3	Female	30-35	8
T2	School 3	Female	25-30	13
T1	School 4	Male	35-40	15
T2	School 4	Female	35-40	14
HOD 1	School 1	Female	40-45	18
HOD 2	School 2	Male	35-40	12
HOD 3	School 3	Female	30-35	13
HOD 4	School 4	Female	40-45	16

Presentation of Findings

Following Braun and Clarke (2006) procedural steps of data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to generate data with the participants. This process yielded five themes namely: active learner participation, exposure to information, infrastructure and networking, improved teaching and learning strategies and learners-centred approach.

Active learner participation

The participants were asked if they shared the same sentiments shared by the researcher that media technology may alleviate some barriers based on their everyday experiences with EFAL classroom interaction. When asked about their envisaged advantages in the use of media technology during EFAL instruction, the participants expressed their various views on this. One of the participants' HODs responded thus:

"...these digital appliances, when in operation, they enforce learners to be active participants (explain how) er ... because they practically interact with the gadgets" (HoD1).

Similarly, another participant agreed that the use of media technology enhances active engagement of learners in learning. This participant (T1) had this to say:

"When learners are using things like tablets or interactive boards, they don't just sit and listen, but they touch, click, and sometimes even lead the activities. It keeps them involved and thinking, not just watching." (T1)

This response implies that if learners can be exposed to media technology gadgets, they will become active participants because the gadgets will gradually make them independent of the teacher and develop a habit of doing things for themselves, constantly occupying themselves with the gadgets. This relieves the teacher of the burden of attending to everyone, considering the huge teacher-learner ratio in the classrooms. The notion of learners being active participants is also echoed by Healy (2008), who opined that media technologies make learners more participative in classroom activities.

Exposure to information

This theme explored participants' views on how media technology exposes learners to information. The participants felt that media technologies expose learners and teachers to a wide range of information. One of them responded thus:

"It will help the learners because they will be able to access the internet, and as teachers, we will be able to have enough information to expose the learners to a variety of information". (T2)

This view is also shared by Kayembe and Nel (2019) who posit that using media technologies enables teachers to develop comprehensive training skills, which are required for 21st-century teaching and learning. The acquisition of extensive knowledge by the teachers augurs well for learners who stand to benefit also from what teachers have gained.

Infrastructure and networking

(Emmanuel, 2018) believes that infrastructure and the teacher-learner ratio have a great impact on the quality of education offered. Before media technology incorporation is effected, infrastructure development must be considered, like Wi-Fi connectivity and all other related technology supplies. In line with this thinking, one participant gave this response:

"It is simple, if the school can have network and media gadgets, teaching and learning can be better ... learners and teachers can network for information through media gadgets, learners can work on their own thus relieving teachers of overcrowded classes... at least learners can work on their own". (HOD 3)

In the same vein, Barrot (2023) opine that language learning through social networking sites has attracted millions of users around the world. They specify Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram as popular social networking sites for language learning. It is therefore for this reason that T6 above views media technology integration into the curriculum as one of the means to alleviate barriers in EFAL instruction. This participant concurs with Maier (2022) and adds that the use of media technologies will enable teachers to handle overcrowded classrooms better since each learner will focus on their gadget.

Improved teaching and learning strategies

holds that the Use of media technology among second language speakers (ESL) holds a significant role in facilitating English language competency, especially the use of smartphones (Utomo, Setiawan, Rachmadtullah, & Iasha, 2021). To support this view, one participant responded like this:

"... it depends on the lesson or the topic; I do use it when I have to display or show them a certain photo, for example, when I have given them a topic ... that talks about feelings, I will go on my cell phone and search for the pictures that ...er will display the pictures that will give the idea of what they have to converse about even say it is about a group discussion so the pictures will help them get the idea and get answers for themselves.". (HOD 4).

This teacher incorporates media technology in his teaching; learners are made to be part of the digital teaching and learning by showing them pictures and with subsequent discussions as a form of assessment and feedback.

Learner-centred approach

Learner-centred approach is so far the best way to ensure the success of teaching and learning, which is in line with learner autonomy. Qolamani and Mohammed (2023) opine that teaching and learning have undergone a significant transformation from a traditional teacher-centred approach to a modern learner-centred approach. One participant on this issue concurred by saying:

"... by involving technology and gadgets, we will be able to have a much more learner-centred approach whereby the teacher plays the role of a facilitator ... learners will be able to access the internet on their own ..." (HOD 2)

Learner-centred approach, through media technology integration, brings about a new dimension of teaching and learning, the teacher becomes more of an overseer who guides the learning process while learners play a more prominent role in most activities. Learner-centred approach instils high self-esteem among learners and yields confidence in their future engagements. It is for that reason that Lee (2000) opines that the incorporation of technology in teaching (Computer Assisted Language Learning) can change learners' attitude towards learning and boost their self-confidence.

4. Discussion of Findings

There are numerous findings that were derived from the experiences of participants. The findings are in line with the objectives of this study. Among the glaring findings is that participants, especially School Management Teams (SMTs), demonstrated a narrow understanding of the concepts of media technologies as teaching and learning tools. In this era of digital technology, their understanding of media technologies revolves around internet gadgets like smartphones, smart TVs, laptops, and a few mentioned audio-visual devices. This narrow view of media technology confirms earlier observations by Katemba (2020), who notes that many teachers still limit their

understanding of digital tools to basic devices.

Such a narrow understanding of a wide range of media technologies by participants, who are teachers, reflects the ill-preparedness of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to meet the technological needs of teachers and provide for them accordingly. The integration of media technology in schools is mandatory. According to (Mhlanga & Molo, 2020) the Ministry of Communications and Digital Technologies had joined hands with the DBE in making virtual reality in schools a success. This means the joint venture must bear positive results. However, the findings of this study show that such efforts have not yet translated into practical improvements in rural EFAL classrooms, which aligns with De Jager et al. (2020) who found similar gaps in implementation.

The findings are in line with the theme that requires discovering the different types of media technologies that can be used to integrate teaching and learning with that media technology type. The other finding is the poor technological infrastructure, which affects connectivity due to inadequate or no Wi-Fi. This hinders the practical incorporation of media technology devices in the classroom, which is the focus of this study. This is consistent with Chisango et al. (2020), who report that rural schools often lack stable infrastructure, connectivity, and functional devices needed for digital teaching.

The main findings, which participants were also unanimous with, are that if teachers can be trained in the use of media technology, teaching and learning barriers will be alleviated. This becomes a major challenge to the DBE to ensure that media technology becomes part of teaching and learning in this technological era. This echoes the argument by Napratilora et al. (2020) that teacher training improves confidence and strengthens technology integration.

The findings respond to the theme which sought to discover if it is possible to incorporate media technologies in the actual teaching and learning. From the responses, it is obvious that it is not possible because of poor or non-availability of infrastructure and the real gadgets. This situation has also been noted by Malinga (2022), who cautions that schools without connectivity cannot participate fully in the digital transformation agenda. The effective use of media technologies must culminate in a more learner-centred approach where learners can work independently of the teachers due to acquisition of digital skills if the gadgets were available and teachers adequately trained in the use of digital gadgets. This aligns with Bai, Hew and Huang (2020) who highlight that digital tools encourage autonomy and allow learners to learn at their own pace through self-directed and gamified activities.

In a nutshell, the Department of Basic Education seems to have reneged from its mandate with other stakeholders to ensure that schools, teachers and learners are provided with media technology infrastructure, Wi-Fi and gadgets to align teaching and learning with digital demands of the current era. Scholars such as Ghansah (2025), similarly argue that unequal distribution of digital resources continues to disadvantage rural schools.

The findings from the participants showed that media technologies ought to be incorporated into the curriculum for a variety of positive. One of the participants advocates for support on the capacitation of teachers with modern digital teaching and learning methods, which is typical of the 4th Industrial Revolution technology. Bai, Hew, and Huang (2020) highlighted that the relevance of media gadgets, especially for EFAL instruction, is an advantage for teaching and learning. Media technologies are attractive to learners because they consist of the Do It Yourself (DIY) activities (gamifications) which inspire learners to access the gadgets anytime, anywhere by learning through play. Some games are self-assessing, and that assists teachers in monitoring learner progress even if the learner is not with them. This observation resonates with Solano, Cabrera, Ulehlova and Espinoza (2017) who found that technology supports learning inside and outside the classroom through flexible, self-paced tools.

5. Recommendations

In the backdrop of the findings which are based on the actual hands-on experience of the participants about enhancing media technologies in overcoming barriers in English First Additional Language for Intermediate Phase Learners, this study make significant recommendations that since the glaring discovery is the narrow understanding of teachers of a wide range of media technologies, it is imperative that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) provides media gadgets to schools and schedule training workshops for teachers in the effective use of those gadgets, lest they become white elephants in schools. Additionally, to scaffold learners to the global digital standard by networking with local, national, and even international peers. Both teachers and learners acquire research skills, and learners eventually become independent of their teachers. This is in line with the notion that teaching and learning must culminate in a more learner-centred approach. Before media technological gadgets are made available in schools, there must be intensive training of teachers in the use of those gadgets, infrastructure must be conducive to incorporating media technology, which means network and Wi-Fi connectivity will be improved, thus also improving teaching and learning. It is therefore the responsibility of the DBE to provide teacher training programs, enhance infrastructure and resources availability, develop and implement policies and procedures for media technology integration in the classroom and promote collaborative learning environments.

6. Conclusion

The observations and findings from this study vividly show that the teaching and learning of EFAL in the intermediate phase is far from incorporating media technologies in the classroom. This is due to various valid reasons highlighted during the interaction with teachers, like inadequate or non-availability of media gadgets in most schools. Teachers' ignorance in the use of media technology gadgets and, importantly, unstable and inconsistent Wi-Fi supply. The latter aspect even hinders those teachers who are prepared to sacrifice their gadgets because of the lack of connectivity. These are challenges that are going to haunt the DBE for a long time, which, if not attended to,

will disengage intermediate phase learners from the much-needed global digital exposure. However, on the positive side, there are attempts to counter the situation in some districts, which is commendable, though at a very slow pace.

In terms of novelty of the study, while many studies have explored the general use of technology in English language teaching, limited attention has been given to how media technologies can specifically address learning barriers faced by English First Additional Language (EFAL) learners in the intermediate phase. This study adds new insight by focusing on practical, classroom-based integration of accessible media tools that respond to learners' contextual challenges such as limited exposure to authentic English input, low motivation, and restricted linguistic support at home. Unlike previous research that often emphasised high-end or theoretical models of technology use, this investigation foregrounds teachers' lived experiences and adaptive practices in resource-constrained settings. By doing so, it contributes an interpretive understanding of how media technologies can bridge learning gaps, foster engagement, and promote language confidence among EFAL learners.

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Obtained.

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Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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