Paving the Way for English Language Teaching and Learning through the Integration of ICT

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Abstract

This study/presentation examines the integration of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in English language teaching and learning in the United States and Europe. The research investigates ICT tools and strategies addressing different styles of English education structured in a comparative analysis. English language learning is an ongoing factor linking leadership, teacher education and a wide range of intellectual disciplines. Technology has resulted in a digital culture demonstrating tremendous advances in language learning [1]. English language teaching has a unique set of challenges providing an overarching opportunity to impact success and serve as a catalyst for expansion of learning. Strong programs incorporating ICT in English language teaching leading to quality educational experiences designed to meet the unique needs of learners are particularly valuable. They further address the linkages between countries providing an innovative, transformative, and equitable educational environment that prepares students for success and advances English learning throughout the world.

Keywords: *ICT, English Language Teaching/Learning*

1. Introduction

The goal of this study focuses on investigation and implementation of quality ICT instructional strategies by engaging in information gathering regarding ICT language learning methods and processes employed in varied locations and situations. Preliminary results leading to a more comprehensive study are shared in this manuscript. The methodology of this study utilizes a multi-case design for the purpose of conducting comparative research in English language learning in schools in the United States and Europe. Authentic accounts of English language learning will be gained through interviews of educational leaders, observations, and review of selected relevant literature. Further collaboration with colleagues leads to in depth exploration of ICT and systematic collection of data providing opportunities to gain further access to resources, methodological tools, and best practices. The pedagogical potential including meaningful research opportunities and analytics, as well as strategies for educators to frame best practices focused on the diverse learning needs of students strengthens success. Further data will be used and analyzed to construct a matrix comparison between the two learning environments. Embracing English language learning, new technologies, and initiating change through proactive ICT educational strategies will lead to relevant and purposeful accomplishments.

2.Review of the literature

Throughout the USA and Europe, there are standards and requirements for teaching emergent bilingual learners and developing their English language skills. It is necessary to use modern approaches and tools of ICT to develop better understanding and acquisition of basic skills of the English language, and ICT makes the English language environment interactive, flexible, and innovative [2]. There is a continuing demand for English language proficient citizens in both the USA and throughout Europe. The purpose for mastering English in both locations may vary, but the motivation and accomplishments of English learners is clearly evident and the role of ICT in this endeavor is integral to students' success. ICT breakthroughs have brought new opportunities to restructure the language learning/teaching settings and ICT has opened new avenues and brought interesting challenges to language learners and teachers [3]. Oliver recognizes ICT as a change agent and further points out its valuable role in positively impacting students in higher education during the 21st century. He suggests that ICT has "blazed a trail in our learning, work and lives" [4]. When students are exposed to the ICT world, it will help them to communicate effectively locally or globally, and, as a result, the students are able to improve their communication skills and they will be expected to communicate in English embracing its use and continuing to strengthen their skills [5]. Educators in

both the USA and Europe need to be afforded the opportunity for professional development experiences that include the incorporation of ICT in their classroom. Unfortunately, they may have been subjected to professional development schemes that haven't provided the support required to sustain educational change and reform [6]. Paving the way for successful ICT strategies requires professional development that is relevant and appropriate for teaching English language learners, and further provides collaborative experiences with educators and students as both become part of a professional learning community.

3. English language teaching in the USA

In the USA, increased emphasis is being placed on the development of language skills for Emergent Bilingual (EB) students. Evidence-based instructional practices are incorporated into the curriculum to strengthen language and literacy development while accelerating learners. The WIDA framework has been embraced across the USA as a valuable asset featuring English language development standards and a foundation for curriculum, instruction and assessment for multilingual learners [7]. Scientific inquiry and ICT tools are utilized to serve as exemplary components of instruction that is engaging and interactive. Culturally responsive education is at the forefront of educational practices as educators strive to meet the needs of a multiplicity of diverse ethnic groups, educational experiences, and abilities within unique educational communities. The strengths associated with valuable professional development are tantamount to teacher and student success. This professional development addresses myriad ICT teaching strategies tailored to grade, language, and ability level. Online and virtual instruction are integral components of English language development and educators are encouraged to become familiar with and address the standards that have been developed for English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in order to maximize language development. Another key area that is being emphasized for language proficiency is content area education. Educators who may be teaching in specific subject areas or addressing content other than English language learning are encouraged to gain a better understanding of learning styles for students grappling with content in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. There are excellent ICT subject specific tools available. Collaboration among students and teachers is another key to promoting meaningful interaction and learning for English language learners (ELLs) and new Americans. Educators emphasized the value of discussion boards, videos, breakout rooms, multimedia chats, and online virtual platforms available worldwide for interactive online learning. Co-teaching has also been another successful strategy for meeting the needs of students and ICT is a valuable tool for supporting students across various teaching models. The *Standards for Initial TESOL Pre-K–12 Teacher Preparation Programs* outline the unique content, pedagogical knowledge, and skills necessary to prepare effective Pre-K–12 TESOL educators in the United States [8]. In addition, emphasis is placed on connecting families within the school and community. Educators are encouraged to become familiar with the area in which they teach and focus on culturally relevant pedagogy. Meeting and interacting with parents to gain a better understanding of their students is emphasized and interpersonal relations are viewed as essential.

4. English language teaching in Europe

The strengths and accomplishments of ICT in Europe are significant, and the information provided by educators throughout Europe supports the need to build on programs that have been successful. This is further recognized by the European Commission who has stated that, "The development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is vital for Europe's competitiveness in today's increasingly digital global economy. Over €20 billion from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) was available for ICT investments during the 2014-2020 funding period. These investments are vital for the success of the Commission's objective of making Europe fit for the digital age." [9] At Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun, Poland, tremendous effort is devoted to educational technology and opportunities for students to learn English and excel in media and technology. The university offers a combination of practical English courses and language studies field-specific seminars and lectures. The Technical University of Berlin offers an ICT program designed to strengthen ICT skills and qualifications of graduates. Numerous other German universities feature programs and seminars for educators that focus on ICT skills. In France, national policies and practices for education advocate and support more efficient use of ICT-related resources through strengthening of ICT-sharing partnerships, and ICT coordinators were added to assist educators to intergrate ICT activities into their teaching. [10]. Pixel international educational and training institution in Florence, Italy, brings educators together annually for an international conference on ICT for language learning. This valuable experience affords the opportunity for educators to collaborate and share information, research, and expertise on ICT. The dynamics of learning English in Europe differ

from those in the USA due to the purpose behind the challenge. English is recognized as a global language and European students often have the desire to add this to their repertoire of skills and accomplishments. In Europe, students continue to use their home language throughout the day and the use of English is an additional asset that they are endeavoring to acquire. Throughout Europe, with the exception of some rural areas, ICT is available in schools and at home through various forms of computer software, educational tools, and digital infrastructures. Students have access to global networks as well as ICT programs and curriculum in their schools and at home. For some students, learning English is more difficult because they do not have the reinforcement of being surrounded by English speakers or the opportunity to utilize the English language on an ongoing basis. ICT opportunities and their English-speaking counterparts, teachers and colleagues can provide valuable support for their learning. Professional development in ICT strategies and technologies is essential and preparing educators to provide a quality education for their students is tantamount to their success. An innovative curriculum for English learners in Europe that includes ICT opportunities and best practices for implementation of ICT technologies will provide a high-quality education and successful English language instruction.

5. Conclusions and future recommendations

European and USA educators embrace ICT and realize the value of ICT opportunities for their students. ICT has the capability to make English learning come alive and become more relevant than a textbook can do. Sharing the exemplary components of ICT program will provide a framework to expand collaborative educational endeavors within professional educational communities in the USA and Europe. ICT has the capability to empower educators and impact instruction. Increasing the achievement of English learners is essential and preparing educators to provide quality educational experiences through ICT is valuable and essential. The innovative strengths of ICT are significant and support the need to build on and expand existing programs and opportunities. Professional development to increase educators' knowledge of ICT and implementation of ICT tools will make a positive impact. The expansion of this study, further data collection, analysis, and recommendations for ICT in English language acquisition are suggested for strengthening student and educator performance and achievement.

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