THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEGRATING DIGITAL SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS IN ACADEMIC LYCEUMS

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Abstract: In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, the integration of digital skills into language instruction has become essential for academic success. This article examines the importance of integrating digital skills into English language teaching in academic lyceums. By equipping students with digital literacy, educators not only enhance their English proficiency but also prepare them for higher education and the global workforce. This study explores the benefits of incorporating digital tools and platforms in the classroom, the challenges faced by teachers and students, and effective strategies for successful implementation.

Keywords: Digital skills, English language teaching, academic lyceums, digital literacy, educational technology, blended learning, project-based learning, language acquisition digital tools in education

Introduction: The digital era has transformed education, with technology becoming an integral part of teaching and learning processes. Academic lyceums, which serve as preparatory institutions for higher education, are no exception. Teaching English in such institutions must go beyond traditional methods, integrating digital skills to meet the demands of the 21st century. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, digital tools and resources can enhance language acquisition and provide students with essential skills for their future careers. This article explores the importance of incorporating digital skills into English teaching for students in academic lyceums and offers strategies for effective integration.

Digital literacy is becoming a crucial competence for students across all disciplines. For English learners, the use of technology can offer immersive and interactive experiences, allowing them to practice language skills in diverse contexts. In academic lyceums, students are expected to develop advanced levels of English proficiency, which often requires the ability to use digital resources effectively. Digital platforms allow students to access authentic English-language materials such as news articles, podcasts, videos, and e-books. This exposure to real-world English enhances their comprehension and provides context for language use, making learning more

relevant and engaging. For example, students can use platforms like YouTube to watch interviews or TED Talks, which improve their listening and vocabulary skills.

The integration of digital tools such as video conferencing, chat rooms, and forums encourages students to communicate in English with peers worldwide. This fosters both written and spoken communication skills while building students' confidence in using English in practical settings. Programs like Zoom or Google Meet can facilitate international exchange projects, offering students a chance to practice real-time conversations. Using digital tools in the classroom encourages collaborative learning. Group work on digital platforms, such as Google Docs or Microsoft Teams, allows students to co-create content in English, promoting teamwork and critical thinking. By working together on projects or presentations, students improve their problem-solving skills while practicing the target language.

Challenges in Integrating Digital Skills: Despite the clear benefits, integrating digital skills into English teaching at academic lyceums can present several challenges. These include limited access to technology, insufficient teacher training, and students' varying levels of digital literacy.

•Digital Divide: Not all students have equal access to devices and reliable internet, particularly in less affluent regions. This inequality can create gaps in learning opportunities, leaving some students at a disadvantage. Schools need to ensure that all students have access to the necessary technology to participate fully in digital learning activities.

•Teacher Training and Readiness: Many teachers may feel unprepared to integrate digital tools into their teaching due to a lack of training or experience. Continuous professional development programs focused on digital pedagogy are essential to equip educators with the skills needed to effectively use technology in the classroom. Teachers must be trained not only in using digital tools but also in designing lessons that incorporate these tools meaningfully.

•Students' Varied Digital Literacy: While some students are proficient in using digital tools, others may struggle. This variation in digital literacy can hinder the learning process, particularly when students are required to use advanced technology. Teachers must assess their students' digital competence and provide support where needed to ensure that all learners can benefit from technology-enhanced lessons.

To successfully integrate digital skills into English teaching, educators must adopt a systematic approach. The following strategies can help overcome challenges and ensure effective use of technology in the classroom.

Combining traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning (blended learning) can provide a balanced approach. For instance, teachers can deliver grammar lessons in class and assign online exercises for practice. This not only makes learning more flexible but also allows students to work at their own pace.

There is a wide array of digital tools available that can be tailored to language learning. Applications such as Duolingo, Quizlet, and Kahoot can be used to reinforce vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension skills in a fun and interactive way. Incorporating these tools into lessons can motivate students and make learning more engaging.

Furthermore, project-based learning, where students create digital content such as blogs, videos, or presentations in English, allows them to apply both their language and digital skills. By completing projects that require research, writing, and presentation, students develop critical thinking and communication skills that are essential for academic and professional success.

Conclusion: The integration of digital skills into English teaching for students in academic lyceums is essential for preparing them for future academic and professional environments. While challenges such as limited access to technology and varying levels of digital literacy exist, a strategic approach to integrating digital tools can greatly enhance language learning. By adopting blended learning, utilizing educational apps, and fostering project-based learning, educators can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that equips students with the English and digital skills necessary for success in the modern world.

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