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CHALLENGES TEACHERS FACE IN INTEGRATING ICT INTO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract:
Integrating information and communication technology (ICT) into English language teaching offers immense potential for enhancing learning outcomes. However, teachers face numerous challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training, the digital divide, resistance to change, time constraints, classroom management issues, language-specific limitations, technical problems, and assessment concerns. These barriers hinder the effective use of ICT in fostering interactive and personalized learning experiences. This article explores these challenges in detail and provides practical recommendations for addressing them, such as investing in infrastructure, offering comprehensive professional development, and promoting collaboration among educators. By overcoming these obstacles, educators can unlock the transformative potential of ICT in English language teaching.

Keywords: ICT integration, English language teaching, teacher challenges, digital divide, professional development, educational technology

Introduction

In the 21st century, information and communication technology (ICT) has revolutionized education, making it an essential component of teaching and learning processes. For English language teaching, ICT tools offer diverse opportunities, including interactive activities, personalized learning, and access to a wealth of online resources. However, the successful integration of ICT into classrooms is not without its challenges. Teachers often encounter numerous barriers that hinder their ability to fully leverage the potential of technology in enhancing language learning. This article explores these challenges and suggests possible solutions to overcome them.

Main Challenges

1. Lack of Infrastructure and Resources

A significant barrier to ICT integration is the lack of proper infrastructure and resources. Many schools, particularly in developing countries, face issues such as inadequate access to computers, unreliable internet connectivity, and outdated software. According to Alshmrany and Wilkinson (2017), limited infrastructure remains a critical obstacle, especially in rural areas where funding for technological advancements is scarce. Without basic tools, teachers struggle to implement ICT-based lessons effectively.

2. Insufficient Training and Support

Teachers often report insufficient training as a major impediment to integrating ICT into their teaching practices. Professional development programs may focus more on theoretical aspects than practical applications of ICT tools. Moreover, ongoing support is rarely provided, leaving teachers feeling unprepared and overwhelmed. As noted by Tondeur et al. (2018), structured training programs that combine technical skills with pedagogical strategies are vital for successful ICT integration.

3. Digital Divide and Inequality

The digital divide continues to pose challenges, particularly in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Students from low-income families may lack access to devices or the internet at home, exacerbating educational inequalities. Teachers in such settings face the additional challenge of ensuring equitable access to learning materials for all students. This inequality limits the potential of ICT to act as an inclusive educational tool (Warschauer, 2011).

4. Resistance to Change

Teachers often exhibit resistance to adopting new technologies due to fear of the unknown or a preference for traditional teaching methods. Older teachers, in particular, may feel intimidated by ICT tools and worry about increased workload or technical complexities. Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) argue that addressing these psychological barriers requires a shift in mindset, supported by encouragement and positive experiences with technology.

5. Time Constraints

Integrating ICT into lesson plans can be time-consuming, especially for teachers unfamiliar with technology. They must invest time in learning to use new tools,

preparing materials, and troubleshooting technical issues. Additionally, rigid curricula often leave little room for experimentation with ICT-based methods, further discouraging teachers from incorporating them into their classrooms (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

6. Classroom Management Issues

The use of ICT in classrooms can present unique management challenges. Teachers may find it difficult to monitor students' activities on devices, leading to potential distractions or misuse of technology. For example, students might browse social media or play games instead of engaging with the lesson. Effective classroom management strategies and appropriate policies are essential to address these issues (Scherer et al., 2019).

7. Language-Specific Challenges

While ICT tools offer a range of applications for general education, resources specifically tailored to English language teaching can be limited. Teachers may struggle to find tools that effectively address grammar, pronunciation, or speaking skills. Moreover, generic tools may not align with curriculum goals or the specific needs of learners, reducing their utility in language instruction (Hockly, 2018).

8. Technical Issues

Frequent technical glitches, such as software crashes, connectivity problems, or hardware failures, disrupt the flow of lessons and frustrate both teachers and students. Without readily available IT support, these issues can consume valuable teaching time. Teachers need reliable systems and immediate technical assistance to minimize disruptions (Tondeur et al., 2018).

9. Assessment and Evaluation Concerns

The use of ICT in assessing language skills presents additional challenges. Tools for evaluating speaking and writing skills are often limited or require significant manual intervention. Teachers may also lack knowledge of digital assessment methods or tools, making it difficult to align evaluations with ICT-based teaching approaches (Chapelle & Voss, 2016).

Solutions and Recommendations

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach. Governments and educational institutions should invest in infrastructure and ensure equitable access to

technology. Professional development programs must be practical, continuous, and tailored to the needs of teachers. Collaborative platforms where teachers can share best practices and resources can foster a supportive community. Additionally, developing user-friendly ICT tools specifically for language teaching can enhance their effectiveness.

Policymakers should also consider creating flexible curricula that allow teachers to experiment with ICT-based methods. Providing IT support and establishing clear guidelines for classroom technology use can help teachers manage technical and behavioral issues. Finally, integrating ICT into teacher education programs can ensure that future educators are well-prepared to use technology in their teaching practices.

While ICT offers immense potential to transform English language teaching, the challenges faced by teachers cannot be overlooked. From infrastructural limitations to psychological barriers, these issues require comprehensive solutions to ensure effective integration. By addressing these challenges, educators can unlock the full potential of ICT to enhance learning outcomes and prepare students for a digitally-driven world.

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