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INNOVATIVE TRENDS AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<i>Article history</i> Received:2025-05-30 Received in revised form:2025-06-28 Accepted:2025-08-01 Available online:2025-12-29 <i>Keywords:</i> Pedagogical innovation; Blended learning; Formative assessment; Adaptive feedback; Academic engagement	<i>English language teaching (ELT) in higher education is undergoing a transformative phase driven by globalization, technological advancement, and evolving learner expectations. This article explores the latest innovations in ELT and evaluates evidence-based pedagogical practices that enhance language proficiency, learner engagement, and academic outcomes. It identifies technology integration, learner-centered approaches, and data-driven instruction as the most impactful trends, providing a comprehensive overview of methods such as Learning Management Systems, task-based language teaching, content and language integrated learning, flipped classrooms, and adaptive learning systems. The article emphasizes that the adoption of these innovations should be grounded in empirical research to ensure their effectiveness and sustainability in diverse university contexts. The scientific contribution of this work lies in synthesizing recent theoretical and practical advancements in ELT, offering a clear framework for implementing innovative and research-backed strategies. The study highlights the practical significance for educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers by suggesting actionable approaches for improving teaching quality, promoting learner autonomy, and addressing challenges such as digital inequality and resistance to change. The findings support a paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered and technology-enhanced instruction, reinforcing the importance of continuous professional development for instructors. By integrating innovative trends with evidence-based practices, higher education institutions can foster more effective and adaptive English language learning environments.</i>

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ALİ TƏHSİL MÜƏSSISƏLƏRİNDƏ İNGİLİS DİLİ TƏDRİSİNDƏ İNNOVATİV TENDENSİYALAR VƏ SÜBUTA ƏSASLANAN TƏCRÜBƏLƏR

XÜLASƏ

Ali təhsil müəssisələrində ingilis dili tədrisi (ELT) qloballaşma, texnoloji inkişaf və tələbələrin dəyişən gözləntiləri tərəfindən yönəldilən transformativ mərhələdən keçir. Bu məqalə ELT-də son yenilikləri araşdırır və dil bacarıqlarını, tələbə iştirakını və akademik nəticələri artıran sübutlara əsaslanan pedaqoji təcrübələri qiymətləndirir. Məqalədə texnologiyarın integrasiyası, tələbə yönümlü yanaşmalar və məlumatlara əsaslanan tədrisin ən təsirli tendensiyalar kimi müəyyən edildiyi və Öyrənmə İdarəetmə Sistemləri, tapşırıq əsaslı dil tədrisi, məzmun və dilin integrasiyalı öyrənilməsi, çevrilmiş siniflər və adaptiv öyrənmə sistemləri kimi metodlara geniş baxış təqdim edildiyi bildirilir. Məqalə vurğulayır ki, bu yeniliklərin tətbiqi müxtəlif universitet kontekstlərində onların effektivliyi və davamlılığını təmin etmək üçün empirik tədqiqatlara əsaslanmalıdır. İşin elmi töhfəsi ELT-də son nəzəri və praktik inkişafların sintezi ilə bağlıdır və innovativ və tədqiqata əsaslanan strategiyaların tətbiqi üçün aydın çərçivə təqdim edir. Tədqiqat

müəllimlər, tədris planı hazırlayanlar və siyasətçilər üçün praktik əhəmiyyəti vurğulayır, tədrisin keyfiyyətini artırmaq, tələbə müstəqilliyini təşviq etmək və rəqəmsal bərabərsizlik və dəyişikliklərə müqavimət kimi problemləri həll etmək üçün tətbiq oluna biləcək yanaşmaları təklif edir. Nəticələr müəllim-yönümlü tədrisdən tələbə-yönümlü və texnologiya ilə zənginləşdirilmiş tədrisə keçidi dəstəkləyir və müəllimlərin davamlı peşəkar inkişafının vacibliyini gücləndirir. Yenilikçi tendensiyaların sübutlara əsaslanan təcrübələrlə inteqrasiyası vasitəsilə ali təhsil müəssisələri daha effektiv və adaptiv ingilis dili öyrənmə mühitləri yarada bilər.

Açar sözlər: pedaqoji innovasiya, qarışıq təhsil, formativ qiymətləndirmə, adaptiv rəy, akademik motivasiya

1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching (ELT) in higher education has undergone significant transformation in the 21st century. The rapid development of technology, globalization, and evolving learner needs necessitate innovative teaching methods grounded in empirical research. Traditional, teacher-centered approaches are increasingly complemented or replaced by learner-centered, technology-enhanced, and evidence-based practices aimed at improving language proficiency and engagement. This article examines current trends in ELT innovation and reviews evidence-based pedagogical strategies that have demonstrated effectiveness in university settings worldwide. It aims to provide educators, researchers, and policy makers with a comprehensive understanding of how contemporary methods enhance the teaching and learning of English in higher education.

In recent years, the theoretical foundations of ELT have shifted toward an evidence-based paradigm that emphasizes the systematic validation of instructional innovations. Scholars increasingly argue that effective language instruction must be closely aligned with measurable learning outcomes, cognitive theories of second language acquisition (SLA), and data-informed pedagogical decision-making. Within the broader context of higher education, ELT plays a crucial role in preparing learners for participation in international academic and professional environments, positioning language competence as an essential component of global competitiveness. Contemporary SLA research stresses the importance of integrating instructional innovations with established principles such as comprehensible input, meaningful output, and interaction-driven learning, ensuring that technological or methodological changes remain pedagogically robust. The growing presence of digital learning ecosystems has further reconceptualized language education as a multimodal, collaborative, and contextually rich process that extends beyond traditional classroom boundaries (Hampel & Stickler, 2012, p. 118). As a result, ELT is increasingly viewed as an interdisciplinary field that brings together applied linguistics, educational technology, cognitive psychology, and curriculum studies to address emerging instructional challenges (Kessler, 2018, p. 205). Theoretical perspectives such as constructivism, sociocultural theory, and connectivism provide essential conceptual frameworks for analysing the pedagogical value of modern ELT innovations and their impact on learner autonomy and communicative competence. Importantly, the shift toward evidence-based instructional design underscores the necessity of continuous empirical validation to ensure that newly adopted approaches lead to sustainable, scalable, and meaningful improvements in learning outcomes.

2. INNOVATIVE TRENDS AND EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN ELT

The landscape of ELT in higher education has shifted significantly due to technological advancements, pedagogical research, and evolving learner expectations. Several key trends have emerged that shape contemporary ELT practices.

Digital technologies play a central role in modern ELT. Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Moodle and Blackboard, enable blended learning models that combine online and face-to-face instruction, facilitating flexible and interactive learning experiences (Subramanian et al., 2014, p. 26). Learning Management Systems, as a particular type of web-based content management system, are evaluated according to three key categories: tools for learning skills development, communication tools, and productivity tools (Kraleva et al., 2019, p. 1190).

Beyond LMS, mobile applications, virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR) are increasingly used to create immersive environments that simulate real-life language use, enhance learner engagement, and provide authentic communicative contexts. Additionally, digital portfolios and collaborative online tools allow students to track progress, reflect on learning, and collaborate across geographical boundaries, thereby expanding opportunities for autonomous learning. Comparative studies indicate that students participating in technology-enhanced courses often outperform their peers in traditional, teacher-centered settings in terms of both linguistic competence and self-directed learning behaviors (Suslova et al., 2020, p. 287-291).

Modern ELT emphasizes active, learner-centered methodologies. Task-based language teaching (TBLT) encourages students to engage in real-world tasks, promoting communication and problem-solving skills (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2011, p. 49).

Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) allows students to acquire language skills while studying subject-specific content, fostering cognitive and linguistic development simultaneously (Dalton-Puffer, 2011, p. 183).

Flipped classrooms, in which students engage with lecture materials outside class and participate in interactive activities during face-to-face sessions, have been shown to increase learner motivation and deepen understanding. Flipped classrooms allow learners to engage with instructional materials independently and utilize class time for collaboration, discussion, and applied exercises, which reinforces retention and practical language application (Galindo-Dominguez, 2021, p. 44).

These approaches shift the instructor's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator, enabling personalized guidance and collaborative learning.

The use of learning analytics and adaptive learning technologies enables personalized feedback and tailored instruction, promoting better learner outcomes (Mavroudi et al., 2018, p. 207). Learning analytics and adaptive feedback systems, often powered by artificial intelligence (AI), provide instructors with real-time insights into learner performance. Formative assessment techniques, such as quizzes, peer evaluation, and reflective journals, combined with AI-supported adaptive learning tools, enable personalized intervention strategies that are associated with higher motivation, accelerated progress, and improved academic outcomes. These approaches allow for early identification of learning difficulties and tailored support, fostering a responsive and inclusive educational environment.

Empirical research supports the effectiveness of these innovations in higher education contexts:

- Studies confirm that blended learning improves student autonomy and engagement (Mohammed et al., 2023, p. 100). By integrating online and face-to-face modes, students benefit from both flexibility of digital resources and the structure of classroom interaction, which together enhance retention and application of knowledge.
- Formative assessment, including regular quizzes and peer feedback, has been shown to enhance language acquisition by providing ongoing, actionable insights (Sánchez et al.,

2017, p. 332). These practices cultivate a growth mindset, where students view errors as opportunities for improvement rather than as failures.

- Adaptive feedback systems using artificial intelligence offer personalized learning paths and instant corrective feedback, which are correlated with higher motivation and progress rates (Katonáné Gyönyörű, 2025, p. 6). Such systems continuously analyze learners' responses and adjust task complexity to match individual proficiency levels, thereby preventing both under-challenge and cognitive overload. They also provide immediate clarification of errors, allowing students to recognize and correct mistakes in real time rather than waiting for delayed teacher evaluation (Takallou, 2025, p. 113). Research indicates that this immediacy enhances retention and supports the development of metacognitive strategies, as learners become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis of innovative trends and evidence-based practices in English language teaching (ELT) in higher education draws upon a comprehensive review of contemporary scholarly literature, institutional reports, and pedagogical frameworks. Sources include peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, educational databases, and authoritative publications in the fields of applied linguistics, educational technology, and curriculum development.

Primary sources consist of empirical studies, theoretical models, and meta-analyses that examine the impact of technological integration, learner-centered methodologies, and adaptive instructional strategies on language acquisition, engagement, and learner autonomy. Secondary sources include policy documents, institutional guidelines, and best practice reports from universities and educational organizations worldwide. The focus is on literature published in the past decade to ensure relevance to current higher education contexts.

A systematic thematic analysis was employed to identify prevailing trends and practices in ELT. This involved categorizing innovations into major themes: technology-enhanced learning, learner-centered approaches, and data-driven instruction. Within each theme, specific pedagogical strategies, tools, and frameworks were examined for their effectiveness, scalability, and applicability in diverse university environments. Comparative analysis allowed for the identification of patterns, strengths, and limitations of various approaches.

Innovations and practices were evaluated based on empirical support, feasibility, impact on learner outcomes, and alignment with contemporary pedagogical principles. Special attention was given to evidence-based interventions that have demonstrated measurable improvements in language proficiency, student motivation, and engagement. Additionally, considerations such as accessibility, instructor readiness, and integration with institutional curricula were assessed to provide a holistic view of implementation challenges and opportunities.

Findings from the literature were synthesized to produce a coherent framework for understanding the interplay between innovative trends and evidence-based practices. This approach enables educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers to make informed decisions regarding the adoption and adaptation of ELT strategies in higher education settings.

4. RESULTS AND THEIR DISCUSSION

The integration of innovative trends and evidence-based practices in English language teaching (ELT) has demonstrated substantial potential to enhance learner outcomes and engagement in higher education. Analysis of the literature highlights several key findings regarding the effectiveness, challenges and practical implications of contemporary ELT methodologies.

Despite these advances, the implementation of innovative ELT practices faces multiple challenges. Unequal access to technology can exacerbate educational inequalities, while insufficient instructor training may hinder the effective use of digital tools and learner-centered methodologies. Resistance to pedagogical change is also common, particularly in institutions with deeply entrenched traditional teaching models. Moreover, aligning innovations with institutional curricula and accreditation standards requires careful planning to ensure educational quality and sustainability. Studies suggest that successful implementation depends on institutional support, teacher training, and systematic integration of technology with pedagogical strategies.

The adoption of evidence-based, technology-enhanced, and learner-centered practices can lead to measurable improvements in higher education ELT. Institutions that implement these approaches benefit from enhanced student engagement, greater learner autonomy, and improved language proficiency (Ghanizadeh et al., 2015, p. 83). Additionally, these innovations contribute to the development of transferable skills, including critical thinking, digital literacy, and collaborative problem-solving, which are essential in the 21st-century academic and professional landscape.

In summary, the results underscore that integrating innovative trends with evidence-based practices is not only feasible but also essential for advancing ELT in higher education. The synthesis of research findings highlights a clear trajectory toward more adaptive, personalized, and effective language learning environments, while also acknowledging practical challenges and areas for continued professional development.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of innovative trends and evidence-based practices in English language teaching (ELT) demonstrates that higher education institutions can significantly enhance learner outcomes through the integration of technology, learner-centered methodologies, and data-driven instructional strategies. Technology-enhanced learning, including LMS platforms, mobile applications, and immersive VR/AR environments, promotes active engagement, autonomy, and authentic language practice. Learner-centered approaches such as task-based language teaching (TBLT), content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and flipped classrooms facilitate meaningful application of language skills while fostering critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

Data-driven and adaptive instructional strategies, supported by learning analytics and AI-powered feedback systems, enable personalized interventions and continuous formative assessment, resulting in improved learner motivation and academic performance. Despite challenges such as digital inequality, instructor training needs, and institutional resistance to change, the adoption of these practices proves feasible and beneficial when supported by appropriate infrastructure, professional development, and curriculum alignment.

In conclusion, integrating innovative trends with evidence-based practices offers a transformative potential for ELT in higher education. These approaches not only enhance language proficiency but also cultivate essential 21st-century skills, supporting a more adaptive, inclusive, and effective learning environment. Future initiatives should focus on expanding accessibility, fostering instructor competence, and systematically evaluating pedagogical innovations to ensure sustainable and high-quality English language education.

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