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Original Article

Leveraging Wikis in English Language Teaching: Bridging the Gaps in the **Traditional Methods of Instruction**

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The integration of digital technologies in education is gradually transforming the landscape of language teaching and learning, offering opportunities for innovation

and improvement. However, Traditional Methods of Instruction (TMIs) in the English language are constrained in terms of students' engagement and fostering communicative competence. The limitations of TMIs have prompted educators to

seek alternative pedagogies. Technology-enhanced instruction is viewed as one avenue to revitalize English language teaching. Among these technologies, Wikis have emerged as a promising tool for promoting interactive and student-centred

learning environments. The study on which this paper is based investigated the effectiveness of Wikis as a pedagogical tool in bridging gaps in TMIs in English

language teaching. Grounded in Salmon's Five-Stage Model, this study integrated Learning, Wikis into English language instruction with 20 secondary school students. The Design-Based Wiki intervention was tested through two iterations. The findings revealed that

Wiki-based instruction can effectively address some of the limitations in TMIs by Research, fostering collaborative learning and peer feedback, promoting self-directed learning Salmon's Five-

and autonomy by enhancing all four language skills. The study contributes to the Stage Model. growing body of research on technology-enhanced language learning by

highlighting Wikis' potential to enhance English language teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly digitalized world, several changes are taking place including the area of academic instruction, inclining towards the use of Information Communications Technologies (ICTs). The landscape of English language teaching is also evolving as educators seek innovative approaches to engage learners in the learning process. The New Lower Secondary Curriculum which was rolled out in Uganda in 2020 strongly advocates for the integration of ICTs in academic instruction, including the teaching of the English language which is a compulsory subject. This increasing demand for educational technologies has prompted many countries of the world to adopt, strengthen and modernize their instructional methods so as to improve students' performance and achieve national educational objectives (Gallagher et al., 2019; Kabugo, 2020). TMIs in the English language have often fallen short of providing students with authentic language learning. Textbooks as the primary resource in TMIs often fail to reflect the diversity of language use in real-world contexts.

Wikis, on the other hand, is a dynamic and interactive digital platform that can offer a promising solution to bridge these gaps. Wikis have the potential to facilitate peer-to-peer collaboration and promote self-directed learning by allowing students to explore topics of interest as well as empowering students to take ownership of their learning. By leveraging Wikis, English language educators can create engaging, inclusive, and effective learning environments that bridge the gaps left by TMIs. Despite the potential benefits of Wikibased language teaching, few studies have investigated the effectiveness of Wikis in bridging gaps in the traditional methods of English language

instruction. Salmon's (2002) Five-Stage Model five steps of access and motivation, online socialization, information exchange, knowledge construction and development provided a coherent structure for the researchers to prepare a coherent pattern of the English language online platform (also referred to as e-tivities). This study, therefore, examined the potential of Wikis to enhance learner outcomes and transform English language teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Traditional Methods of Instruction

Traditional English language teaching methods have been found to have a number of limitations that affect effective language learning and application. prioritize standardization often individualization, neglecting the diverse needs and identities of learners (Murray, 2020). The transmission model of teaching which is prevalent in traditional methods, fails to account for the complex and dynamic nature of language learning (Larsen-Freeman, 2019). This often explains TMIs' inability to enhance holistic teaching of some of the English language aspects. In addition, the traditional methods focus much on linguistic competence and largely miss out on the importance of intercultural competence, essential for effective communication in global contexts (Baker, 2020). Baker advocates for integrating intercultural awareness into language instruction. TMIs focus on the mechanics of language learning such as drills, and rote memorization of grammar rules which are no longer adequate to address the contemporary communicative needs of the 21st-century classroom (Kelly, 2012; Godwin, 2018). TMIs leave students uninterested, discouraged, bored and demotivated

and can lead to weak application of language in reallife contexts.

Wikis as a pedagogical tool in English language teaching

Wikis as an instructional tool have gained popularity in the 21st century as one of the online avenues with great affordances in effective language pedagogy (Abeer, 2020). Wikis provide a collaborative platform for students and teachers to achieve their instruction and learning objectives. The collaborative platform hosted by the Wikis is an enabler for English language learners to engage in meaningful interaction hence fostering a sense of community and promoting language development. Wikis provide several pedagogical affordances. They support the development of essential language skills, including reading, writing, listening, and Wikis speaking. offer opportunities collaborative writing and peer feedback (Kessler, 2018; Lee, 2019). Wikis facilitate project-based learning, thereby encouraging students to apply language skills to real-world scenarios. As a result, they promote authentic language use and real-world applications (Gao, 2020; Richter, 2019). Wikis empower students to take ownership of their learning, encouraging autonomy, self-directed learning, and reflective practice. This leads to student-centred and autonomous learning (Magers, 2020; Chapelle, 2019). Wikis enable the integration of language skills and multimedia resources (Ellis, 2019; Johnson & Johnson, 2018). The multimedia capabilities of Wikis therefore enable educators to integrate diverse resources that enrich the English language learning experiences. Wikis, as a collaborative online platform, has emerged as a promising tool for bridging the gaps in traditional English language teaching methods (Kessler, 2018; Lee, 2019). By leveraging Wikis, educators can create interactive, student-centred environments that promote collaborative writing, peer feedback, and authentic language use (Magers, 2020; Richter, 2019).

Subsequently, for plausible results as a pedagogical tool, effective Wiki-based instructional design requires clear goals and tasks (Kessler, 2018). This necessitates student training and support (Lee, 2019), ongoing feedback and assessment (Magers, 2020), and integration with existing curriculum and pedagogy (Chapelle, 2019). Consequently, some researchers suggest the communities of practice theory (Wenger 1998), while Chapelle (2019) suggests technology-enhanced language learning in informing Wiki-based instructional design.

METHODOLOGY

This paper emerges from a two-secondary school term-long study which followed a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach and deployed qualitative research techniques to investigate the effectiveness of integrating Wikis into English language instruction in a selected school in Uganda. DBR involves iterative cycles of design, implementation, and evaluation to develop and refine educational interventions. Purposive sampling which entails the selection of participants or subjects who are directly involved in the phenomenon that is being investigated was used to select the student participants with the guidance of the teachers.

Twenty secondary school students in Senior Three participated in the two successive implementations of the Wiki intervention. The two implementations were important in testing and refining the Wiki technology in addressing the TMI gaps as well as allowing for an evolvement of the new pedagogical principles. These implementations were guided by Salmon's (2004) Five-Stage Model for online learning. This model provided a basis for existing design principles for online English language teaching.

Stage 1: Access and Motivation

The implementation activities were; creating the Wiki learning platform, and face-to-face engagements for purposes of getting an introduction to the project's objectives and expectations. Next

was enrolling participants and having them familiarize themselves with the Wiki platform. This was followed by identifying the aspect of the English language to engage with on the platform.

Stage 2: Online Socialization

The major aim of this step was to promote online socialization as a way of supporting participants to establish their own online identities and build their confidence in working with others online (Salmon, 2002). Participants engaged in icebreaker activities to establish online relationships and different writings were introduced.

Stage 3: Information Exchange

This step involved one exchange of ideas on major aspects of functional writing. Participants collaborated in writing activities on the Wiki page as they shared information and resources. The participants received guidance and feedback from the facilitator.

Stage 4: Knowledge Construction

At this stage, the participants engaged in different writing activities and edited the shared content to demonstrate understanding, as the facilitator encouraged peer review and feedback. However, much of the English language work was done in Microsoft Word and uploaded on the platform. There was an indication that to some extent stage 4 was not successfully achieved. The implication therefore was that; since stage 5 - Fostering Development – is greatly dependent on the success of Stage 4, proceeding to the next stage could not be possible due to the challenges encountered. This therefore necessitated the second iteration – phase 3 of DBR.

Implementation Two

This implementation focused mainly on emphasizing Wiki-based collaboration and content creation. Student participants made use of different created Wiki pages on selected English language aspects, shared resources, and provided peer feedback. The participants also incorporated multimedia elements and engaged in peer review.

This stage involved deep reflections on what worked and what did not work throughout the two implementations to produce revised design principles and the final guidelines for practice. Data from online observations, learners' Wiki-generated artefacts and interviews were analyzed and reflected upon based on Salmon's design principles (existing design principles) for online learning right from implementation throughout as indicated below in Table 1.

Table 1: Formulated (original) design principles, revised design principles and final implementation guidelines for practice.

First implementation – a pilot	Second implementation – actual	_
study	study	
Formulated (existing) design	Revised design principles	Final guidelines for
principles based on, (Salmon, 2002)		consideration in practice
To enable access and motivation	Navigating the learning space.	Supporting flexibility and
		autonomy
To promote online socialization	Fostering collaborative dialogue and	Promoting inclusivity and
	language exchange	accessibility
To support information exchange	Reading and writing for meaningful	Promoting online
	communication	collaborative learning
To promote knowledge construction	Co-constructing meaning and	Promoting integrated
	understanding through language use.	language skills pedagogy
To foster development	Enhancing language skills through	Applying language skills
	reflection, feedback and shared	
	meaning	

In view of the above table, each of the design principles was validated through continuous monitoring, refinement and systematic documenting of the successes and challenges at each subsequent iteration phase. This enabled informed refinements. The renaming of the design principles was guided by Salmon's (2002) framework for online learning and the final emerged organically guidelines from the intervention processes.

RESULTS

Four themes emerged from the analyzed data. These include enhanced English language skills, Student-centred English language learning, Inclusive English language learning environment and enhanced learner interest in the English language.

Enhanced English language skills

The integration of Wikis in English language instruction yielded remarkable enhancements across all four language skills. Notably, Wiki-based writing activities were found to foster creative writing and text editing skills, allowing learners to refine their written expressions. The reading and listening skills also improved, as learners engaged with peer-generated content and multimedia resource materials. The Wiki-based discussions and audio/video recordings significantly enhanced speaking skills. In particular, the pronunciation was greatly enhanced as learners received feedback and modelled their speech after peers and facilitators. Additionally, grammar learning was reinforced through collaborative text creation and revision.

The figure below demonstrates how the teacher used a Wiki activity to encourage the use of the four language skills.

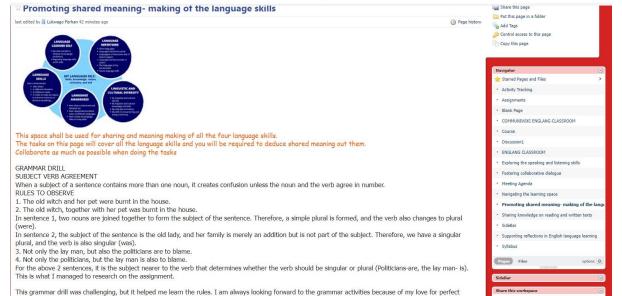


Figure 1: Task showing the teaching of listening, speaking and writing skills

Figure 1 above reveals that the Wiki online learning-based activity offered a comprehensive approach to enhancing English language skills, integrating listening, speaking and writing competencies. Through attentive listening to the audio link provided by the instructor, and responding to the task, the learners' receptive skill

vocabulary usage in speech and sentence formation.

(listening) was enhanced. This fostered their ability to comprehend and interpret spoken language. Transcribing the audio word-for-word, was key in developing their writing skills, focusing on accuracy, grammar, and syntax. The subsequent recording of their transcripts can be found on the following link https://mega.nz/file/15JB0KDI#-

Add a new writer to the workspace.

7ZE1KN4q6ByMO7_uIp8SPTkF3kNdvL-

P5d42d1sqeU and it illustrates how the learners were able to practice their speaking skills, work on pronunciation, intonation and fluency. The process of uploading the manifesto audio clips and engaging with peers on the Wiki platform fostered a sense of collaborative engagement and learning, encouraging the learners to articulate their thoughts, exchange ideas, and respond to others, hence enhancing their overall English language and proficiency. Consequently, this shows that Wikis as a pedagogical tool has the potential to bridge the gaps in the TMIs and enhance the teaching of the English language.

In line with the task above, the written content shared by the groups on the Wiki online platform (students' Wiki-generated artefacts) demonstrates that there was enhanced learning, more so, with the writing skill. The excerpt from one of the participants below supports this argument.

The video discusses the importance of having a clearly defined purpose by writing a manifesto, which serves as a guiding document and helps communicate your values to your audience. It provides three steps to write a manifesto: focusing on the audience, defining what you bring to the world, and identifying your why.

From the above remark, it can be seen that the learner had listened accurately and grasped the main idea of how to write a Manifesto. The manifesto serves as a guide for "defining what you bring to the world", "identifying your why" and distinguishing supporting details from the main ideas. The learner ably made out meaning from the audio showing effective listening.

Communication was evident by the participant's accurate interpretation of the video content. For authenticity, the video provided real-life language exposure. As for functionality, the student used the listening skill to achieve a purpose – understanding the main ideas, and interaction was through the participant engaging with the video content,

potentially discussing with others. The participant was able to note that the concept of writing a manifesto was a means of clarifying one's purpose and values. This participant further highlights the fact that creating a guiding document that outlines one's intentions and principles, can clearly show their direction and communicate their vision to others. He also mentions the three steps outlined in the video on how to write a Manifesto - focusing on the audience, defining what you bring to the world, and identifying your why. Also, the participant's written response is clear and concise, demonstrating good writing skills with proper use of grammar, spelling, and punctuation. In addition, the response was coherent. All these indicate that the participant had paid attention to writing mechanics.

Student-centred English language learning

The analyzed data further revealed that Wikis as a pedagogical tool in English language instruction promotes learner-centered learning, empowering students to take ownership of their language learning process. Accessibility of the Wiki online learning platform allowed learners to access assignments at any time without relying on teacher availability. In addition, Wiki-based learning also fostered essential 21st-century skills; such as using the Wikis platform with ease to conduct research on various language topics. Self-directed learning developed, in that learners were able to pace their learning and review assignments, unconstrained by time and place restrictions. This shift towards learner autonomy cultivated a more inclusive, flexible, and effective learning environment.

One of the learner participants noted that the Wiki online platform provided freedom of expression and unlimited access to study materials without inconveniencing the teacher and noted as follows:

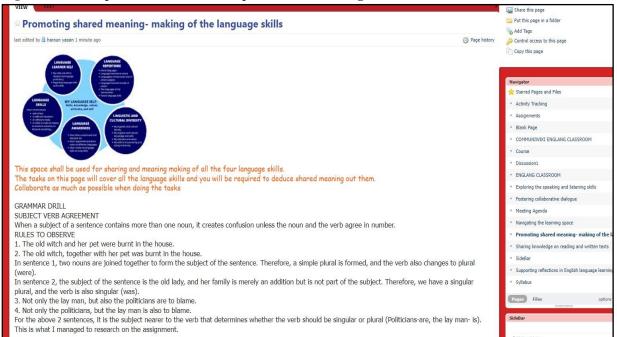
I found the Wiki platform interesting because it was something new and I wanted to explore more, I could express myself in a way I wanted, and in a way, I understood the concept and it was easy for me to access my assignments at

any time of the day without moving around campus looking for the teacher to give me something to do. I could research online and post my work and my teacher would get to see my work later without me stressing him or stressing myself. (Participant B)

The participant notes that the Wiki platform provided an autonomous learning environment that encouraged him to explore its vast possibilities; 'The platform's flexibility allowed me to express myself in a personalized and intuitive manner, enabling me to grasp concepts more effectively and at my own pace".

An analysis of one of the responses shared by a participant on the Wiki online platform on a grammar activity highlights shared meaningmaking which is an indication of learner-centeredness as shown by the example below.

Figure 3: Participant's answer and response to a task on grammar



The participant's response in Figure 3 above to a task on grammar relating to the subject-verb agreement shows the potential of the Wiki learning platform to facilitate a deeper understanding and application of relatively complex grammar concepts. This was done through hyperlinking to related concepts and grammar rules or access to expertise provided by grammar experts. This provided the participants with accurate and reliable information hosted on the Wiki platform. When the participant presented an explanation of the rules governing subject-verb agreement in sentences with multiple nouns, it demonstrated his critical thinking skills regarding the topic. The examples used and the illustrative sentences 1-4 below, as used in

Figure 3 effectively clarify the variations in joint subjects, additional phrases, and the rule of proximity.

- The old witch and her pet were burnt in the house.
- The old witch, together with her pet was burnt in the house.
- Not only the layman but also the politician is to blame.
- Not only the politicians, but the layman is to blame.

This showed that the learner interpreted the grammatical structures.

Inclusive English Language Learning Environment

The study also revealed that Wikis have a substantial positive impact on English language learning. Notably, the findings showed that Wikis cater to diverse learner needs, providing a platform for introverted learners to participate and engage meaningfully in the learning process. Wikis were also found to facilitate accessibility for learners with disabilities. In this study, findings indicate that the Wiki platform supported learners with various learning needs. The inclusive content in the form of clear and simple language supported some of the learners who were experiencing difficulties with their thinking processes. For instance, even the shy students were able to participate by posting their feelings and general responses on the Wiki platform. Furthermore, the Wiki-based collaboration fostered meaningful interaction that promoted peer feedback. Analyzed data further revealed that Wikis introduced innovative ways of learning English by enhancing content coverage and allowing learners to revisit and reinforce previously learned material.

One of the learner participants noted that the Wiki platform caters for learners who are too shy to express themselves in class by remarking that:

One of the benefits of the platform is that it caters for those people who are shy to speak in class but they contribute on the platform. For example, the audios, and the pronunciation task, you take your time and pronounce the words and then submit your work.

The above assertion points to a key advantage of the Wiki online learning platform, the ability to empower introverted learners, as it provides a safe and supportive environment for those learners who rarely participate in traditional classroom discussions. The phrase "shy to speak in class" highlights the challenges faced by learners who

struggle to express themselves verbally in a classroom setting, for fear of judgment or online platform's embarrassment. The Wiki audio recordings features. such as pronunciation tasks as noted by the participant, offer a more comfortable and self-paced space for such learners to exhibit their skills. By allowing users to "take their time" and work at their own pace, the platform enabled the learners to build confidence in their language learning, especially in areas like pronunciation, which are challenging many learners.

A similar argument that was raised by another participant particularly pointed to learners finding interacting with teachers challenging, yet the Wiki platform helped such learners by providing an opportunity for online engagement and feedback. The participant said;

It has provided support to some people who are scared to go to teachers. When you submit your work on the platform, the teacher gets to see the work, mark it or review it and then send it back.

The above remark foregrounds the Wiki online learning platform as a vital pedagogical tool that has the potential to support learners who may feel apprehensive about seeking guidance from teachers in the TMI setting. The phrase "scared to go to teachers" points to the anxiety or fear that some learners may experience. However, the Wiki online platform addresses this concern by providing a comfortable space for submission and feedback. The process of submitting work, receiving reviews, and getting feedback from teachers through the platform, encourages a sense of security and comfort, thereby allowing learners to focus on improving their language without the fear of being judged.

Enhanced learner interest in the English language

The study's analyzed data also revealed that Wikis catered to learners' interests in English language learning, fostering engagement and motivation. By

incorporating content that resonated with learners' passions, Wikis enabled learners to explore areas of their interests such as creative writing, debates, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar in a meaningful way. This personalized approach allowed learners to take ownership of their learning, pursuing topics and activities that sparked their curiosity and resonated with their interests. As a result, learners demonstrated increased enthusiasm and participation, leading to enhanced language learning outcomes.

One of the participants commented that;

I found the Wiki platform interesting because it was something new and I wanted to explore more, I could express myself in a way I wanted, and in a way, I understood the concept and it was easy for me to access my assignments at any time of the day without moving around campus looking for the teacher to give me something to do. I could research online and post my work and my teacher would get to see my work later without me stressing him or stressing myself.

The comment from the participant that "The platform's flexibility allowed me to express myself in a personalized and intuitive manner, enabling me to grasp concepts more effectively and at my own pace" suggests a personalized approach to learning. The ease with which learners are afforded opportunities on the Wiki platform attracts their attention to English language learning. This convenience also enabled the participant to research and submit his work online, saving him the stress of deadlines and face-to-face interactions, while at the same time allowing his teacher to review the submitted work at their convenience.

In addition, another participant used the word 'like' to express interest in learning English using the Wiki platform as highlighted below:

What I like about the platform is its interface, I find it easy. I usually access my assignments

from my teachers. As Ashraf said, you don't get to chase teachers around for assignments. Even when you miss, for example, we might have had an assignment and you are not around, you will still visit the site and you will find the things there.

A reflection on the above comment reveals that the Wiki online platform's user-friendly interface is undoubtedly one of its key appealing features to learners. The phrase, "I find it easy" suggests that it is effortlessly accessible for the participant to navigate and utilize. The participant agrees with the colleague; "Like Ashraf said" particularly in appreciating how he can easily access assignments from his teachers, eliminating the need to engage in the tedious and time-consuming task of "chasing them around campus".

DISCUSSION

The findings in this study revealed that the integration of Wikis in English language instruction has the potential to revolutionize the traditional pedagogical landscape. The traditional methods in English language teaching often fail to cater for all four language skills, with a disproportionate emphasis on the writing skill, and little or no attention is paid to the reading, speaking, and listening skills. On the other hand, Wikis as a pedagogical tool offer a dynamic and collaborative learning environment that bridges gaps in English language learning and development. This is evident as learners can refine their written expressions and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through Wiki-based writing activities. In line with this finding, Godwin (2018) notes that online collaborative writing tools can facilitate learners' writing performance. In addition, the rich Wikimediated multimedia environment enhances reading and listening skills. Learners engage with peer-generated content and diverse resource materials, fostering a deeper understanding of English language aspects. The findings also underscore the significance of social interaction provided by Wikis through feedback from peers in

modelling pronunciation development. This social interaction in a way promotes effective verbal communication. Richter (2019) concurs that social interaction plays a crucial role in pronunciation development. Further, Kasper (2019) highlights the significance of social interaction in language learning as a whole, arguing that "speaking is not just a matter of producing grammatically correct sentences, but also a means of negotiating meaning and establishing relationships". Overall, the study's findings underscore the potential of Wikis to provide an integrated language skill learning experience.

The study findings showed that the seamless integration of Wikis in English language instruction fosters learner-centred learning, where learners assume agency and ownership of their learning experiences. This leads to cognitive benefits like improved reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition, enhanced writing skills, including organization and coherence and better listening and speaking skills, with improved pronunciation and fluency. This finding is supported by Lai (2020) who emphasizes the importance of technologyenhanced language learning, stating that it can lead to improved language proficiency and increased learner autonomy. This learner autonomy, in turn, fosters a culture of inclusivity, accommodating diverse learning styles and needs. More so, Wikibased learning environments encourage learners to reflect on their learning processes, set goals, and self-assess. In view of this argument, Zimmerman (2013) highlights the significance of self-regulation in language learning, arguing that learners must develop self-regulatory skills to manage their own learning. Research has shown that personalized learning environments can significantly improve language learning outcomes (Mager & Perez, 2015). Consequently, the integration of Wikis in English language teaching cultivates a dynamic, studentcentred ecosystem that recognizes learner diversity and promotes effective language learning.

The findings of this study further illuminated Wikis' potential to transform English language teaching into a more collaborative, flexible, and effective experience. It provides an inclusive and dynamic environment that caters to diverse learner needs. By leveraging Wiki technology in English language instruction, educators can create a safe space for introverted learners to contribute meaningfully to the learning process. This mitigates the barriers of traditional classroom discussions where such learners may choose to be silent for fear of being judged. This is supported by Bali (2020) who asserts that introverted learners can participate more comfortably in online discussions, taking their time to formulate their thoughts before contributing. Bali (2020) further observes that Wikis provide a space for learners to engage in reflective learning which is beneficial particularly for introverted learners. In addition, the participatory approach to English language learning provided by Wikis enables learners to collaboratively construct knowledge, and refine their language skills through iterative feedback and revision. This resonates with Abeer (2020) who notes that Wiki-based collaborative learning fosters the co-construction of knowledge, promotes critical thinking, and enhances language skills through peer feedback, revision, and reflection.

Another key finding of this study pointed to the fact that the integration of Wikis in English language teaching has the capacity to revolutionize the way learners engage with course material, tapping into their intrinsic passions and motivations. By providing a platform for personalized learning, Wikis empower learners to explore diverse interests in English language learning ranging, from creative writing to debates, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and other aspects of the English language. This study's finding is strengthened by research emphasizing the importance of teachers incorporating learners' interests into instructional design to foster engagement and motivation (Miyashita, 2020), striving to create a learning environment that values learners' individuality and

interests. This learner-centred approach fosters autonomy, agency, and self-directed learning, echoing the principles of learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). As learners take ownership of their learning, they develop a deeper connection with the subject matter, cultivating a sense of purpose and relevance. The alignment of Wiki-based learning with learner interests and passions resonates with Tomlinson's (2020) findings, which demonstrate the effectiveness of Wikis in fostering engagement and motivation.

CONCLUSION

The implications of this study are far-reaching, suggesting that Wiki integration should be considered a vital component of English language instruction. Educators need to have a mindset change and embrace technology-mediated tools such as Wikis to supplement the traditional methods of instruction. And policymakers should prioritize ICT literacy and research proficiency both of which are key in fostering learner-centered pedagogy. Ultimately. this study demonstrates transformative potential of Wiki integration in English language learning, empowering learners to achieve greater autonomy, agency, and language proficiency.

The study's results resonate with existing research which emphasizes the importance of learner-centered instruction, technology integration, and personalized learning. Wikis have come out as a valuable tool in English language learning, promoting collaborative learning, peer feedback, and self-directed learning. By harnessing the potential of Wikis, teachers can create flexible, inclusive, and effective learning environments that address the diverse needs of 21st-century learners.

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