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New Strategies for Teaching English Language That Meet the Learners' Needs to the Secondary School Students

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Abstract

With recent advancements in English instruction, it is essential to embrace all aspects of research in this field to fully understand the benefits that align with global developments. The researcher highlights several challenges encountered when exploring new trends that assist educators and students in improving English language learning and comprehension. The study is divided into three sections: the first provides an introduction, the second reviews the literature, and the third presents the study's conclusions along with the cited references.

Keywords: Teaching Strategies, English Language, Secondary School Students.

1. Introduction

Ongoing professional development is crucial for educators in schools, as it not only enhances their personal growth and development but can also help prevent burnout and improve job satisfaction. According to Colleen (2013), there is a strong emphasis from policymakers, practitioners, and researchers both nationally and internationally on the significance of teacher professional development. While this trend has often come at the expense of other languages, English has predominantly reaped the benefits and driven this movement forward. Nonetheless, there are indications that English may not maintain its dominance or permanence over other languages. The

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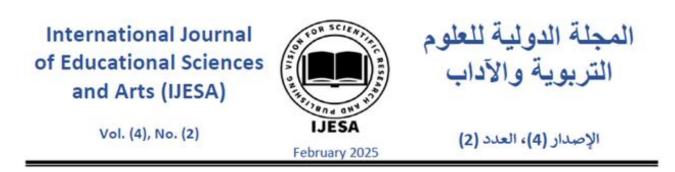


social and sociolinguistic contexts of language education greatly influence which languages are taught, along with the timing and methods of instruction. This reality carries important implications for those involved with second and foreign languages.

Randalli (2009:161-86) asserts that students with disabilities should have access to all school resources, highlighting the necessity of addressing individual learning needs, especially in smaller classroom settings. This leads to the vital question of how researchers can ensure that the balance between demands and support facilitates effective language learning. Lynne (2001: 28) addresses this by stating that "the teacher must establish clear and appropriate language learning goals during the planning phase." Colleen (2013: 22), referencing works by Cordingley et al. (2003, 2005a, 2005b), Robinson et al. (2009: 170-179), Stoll et al. (2006:221-58), and Timperley et al. (2006: 7-11), emphasizes that this planning is essential for delivering effective language instruction. Key elements include:

- 1. Emphasis on both formative and summative needs analysis.
- 2. Collaboration as a strategy for learning.
- 3. Skillful recognition and application of specialized expertise.
- 4. Utilizing evidence from teaching and learning exchanges to shape the learning experience.
- 5. Proactive leadership in professional learning, incorporating explicit modeling or inquiry-based approaches to development.

Given the crucial role that technology plays in nearly every facet of life, contemporary research is adapting to address these challenges, resulting in a growing and intellectually enriching body of work. In light of these considerations, the researcher aims to delve into this study's topic, seeking to uncover new insights that support the teaching of English to learners at various levels.



1.1 The Aim of the Research:

This research aims to investigate strategies for teaching the English language that meet the needs of secondary school students.

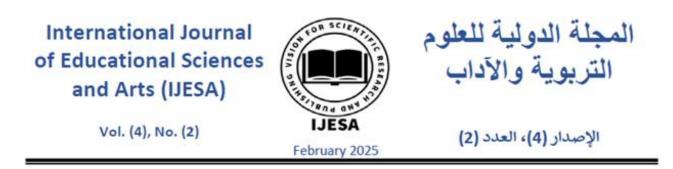
1.2 The Research's Value:

Before the 20th century, there were two primary approaches to language teaching: one focused on helping students use the language by speaking and understanding it, while the other emphasized analyzing the language by mastering its grammatical rules. The **Grammar Translation Approach** was the first of nine major teaching methods in the 20th century, with the **Communicative Approach** being the most recent. With such a wide range of past, present, and future methodologies, what is the best approach for teachers of English as a second or foreign language? To make informed decisions, it is essential to explore which strategies have proven effective and to understand the various available approaches. Additionally, examining the importance of learner needs in relation to the application of modern methods in teaching English as a foreign language is critical.

1.3 New Strategies in Teaching and Learning EFL/ESL:

As the researcher has briefly discussed in the previous paragraphs concerning the historical significance of teaching approaches, it is important to present a concise overview of current trends in language instruction. Despite considerable progress in our comprehension of language teaching and learning in recent decades, the field continues to seek out innovative instructional methods and pedagogical strategies. The global prominence of English as an international language underscores the necessity for more effective teaching techniques.

Jack and Theodore (2014: vi) highlight that "the use of English as a medium of interaction in numerous university programs, the increasing trend of teaching English at the primary level, and advancements in technology all require a



continuous evaluation of past and present practices as teacher educators look for effective materials and activities for their institutions." Deena (2013: 211) also examines several modern approaches to English teaching. Among these current trends are the following:

1. A Shift in the Purpose of English Instruction:

According to Burns (2005: 63), as referenced in Michael and Michael et al. (2009: 95), the focus of contemporary educational goals and outcomes is more on the personal and professional growth of teachers rather than on generating knowledge related to curriculum, pedagogy, or educational systems.

2. Beginning English Instruction Early:

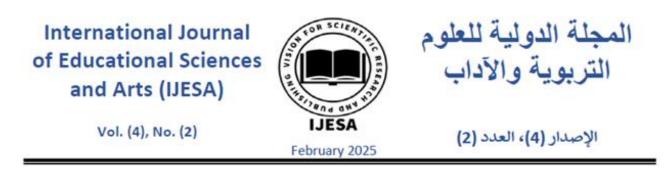
Many countries are now incorporating English instruction in the early grades of education. For instance, since 2011, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam have begun teaching English starting from Grade 4. Likewise, Japan introduced English in primary schools in 2011, while Dubai initiated English education at the kindergarten level instead of Grade 1 in 2012. Numerous other nations, including Iraq, are also introducing English as a foreign or second language at a young age. In Iraq, a significant portion of society is accustomed to acquiring English vocabulary outside the classroom, underscoring the importance of English within Iraqi culture.

3. Modifications to the Method of Teaching Culture:

In English language classrooms, both international and local cultures coexist, with a reduced emphasis on teaching the culture of native English speakers unless it is deemed necessary. Jack and Theodore (2014: 3) note that initiatives aimed at improving the effectiveness of language instruction have frequently concentrated on altering delivery methods. These modifications generally align with the shifting goals of language education.

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4. A Shifting Perspective on English Teachers:

It is increasingly acknowledged that the quality or effectiveness of teachers is determined by their linguistic, teaching, and intercultural competence, rather than their status as native English speakers.

5. Modifications to Test Design and Teaching Content:

Teachers often utilize a variety of local texts or English translations of literature in the classroom. They are encouraged to use the students' first language (L1) when appropriate and to include a range of accents in listening activities or assessments within English language classrooms.

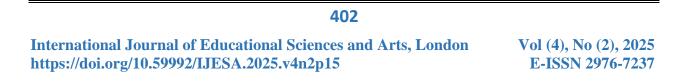
6. A Strategic Approach to Teaching and Learning:

In English language classes, instruction focuses not only on language content, outcomes, and learning activities but also on fostering critical thinking among students. Meaningful and complex interactions between students and teachers take place both inside and outside the classroom. The gamification of learning is emerging as an effective method to make language education more engaging and relevant for younger learners. Students are encouraged to employ communication strategies, such as negotiating meaning, to enrich their learning experiences.

Colleen (2013:120) emphasizes that cultivating a commitment to teachers' learning both at the individual and organizational levels—is essential for integrating professional development into the daily practices of schools. This commitment is crucial for establishing sustainable and principled professional learning systems and for fostering school cultures rooted in these consistent professional practices.

7. Instructors as Lifelong Students:

Penny Ur (2012: 18) highlights a strong reaction against the outdated image of





teachers as dictators and lecturers during the latter part of the 20th century. As a result, educators are now encouraged to view themselves primarily as facilitators, guiding students in developing critical thinking skills, rather than as tellers who simply transmit knowledge. Teachers are seen as advocates for learning rather than enforcers of it. To remain competitive and employable in a knowledge-based society, teachers are expected to engage in continuous professional development throughout their careers, much like in other fields. This includes taking accountability for their own growth and consistently improving their expertise and skills.

Michael and Catherine (2009:57) contrast this modern view with Comenius' instructional framework, in which the teacher is seen as the sole source of knowledge, likened to water flowing from a fountain or warmth radiating from the sun, directly imparting knowledge to students.

2. An Explanation of the Needs of Learners

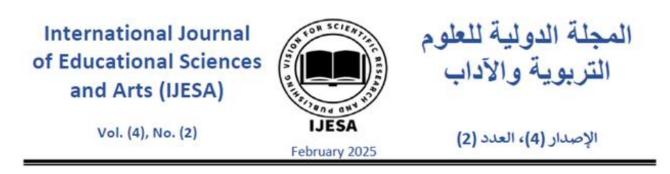
According to Noessel (2003:19), a learner's need is the gap between what the learner aims to achieve from the learning experience and their current level of knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm.

2.1 Determining and Verifying Learner Requirements:

Krumsieg and Baehr (2000:201) state that there is no universally perfect approach to identifying students' needs. Teachers frequently make predictions about these needs based on their experiences with students who have taken similar courses. However, various methods can yield valuable insights into learner needs within a short timeframe, and some strategies prove to be more effective than others in shaping students' expectations regarding instruction.

According to Brian and Hitomi (2010:137), language teaching materials created by teachers themselves can effectively address local needs in ways that global

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materials may not be able to. They emphasize that locally produced materials can highlight the human elements relevant to local learners and teachers and their specific needs.

In the realm of learner needs analysis, four key philosophies underscore the significance of understanding these needs:

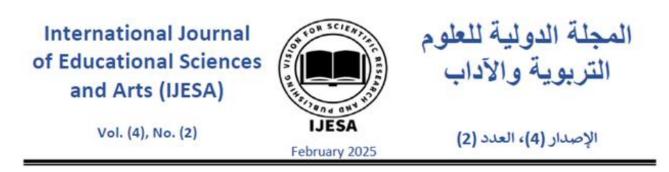
- 1. Discrepancy Philosophy: This approach considers any gaps between the current abilities of students and the linguistic performances required in future scenarios.
- 2. Democratic Philosophy: Needs are defined by the educational goals favored by the majority of the participants.
- 3. Analytical Philosophy: Needs are determined based on what is already known about learners and the learning processes. It identifies the next logical step for students to study.
- 4. Diagnostic Philosophy: As defined by Michael and Catherine (2009:271-2), this philosophy identifies needs as any linguistic skills or components whose absence would be detrimental to the learners' progress.

2.2 Online vs. Traditional Learning Formats:

According to Ware and Kramsch (2005:90–105), "students engage in debate after the lecturer presents an argument. The teacher guides and adjusts the discussion to ensure the intended outcome is achieved but does not correct the learners' use of language semantics." Similarly, in an online setting, the instructor advises students to stay on topic without editing their typing.

Provitera (2001: 119) argues that successful online education requires a higher degree of self-direction and discipline. These qualities can be encouraged through personal development lessons, as greater responsibility for learning rests with the

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learner. By enrolling in the course, students show awareness of their time constraints and strive to meet the deadlines they've set for themselves.

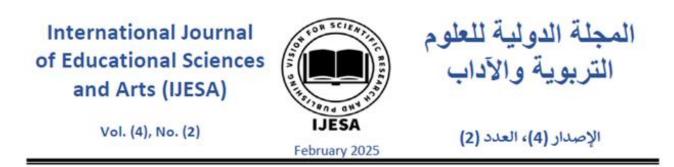
Penny Ur (2013:395) highlights that "you can publish your own ideas online." One way is by starting a blog, which is quite accessible, and there are many successful blogs by English teachers. For example, www.teachingenglish.org.uk offers useful resources. Additionally, Twitter is becoming an increasingly popular platform for teachers and English Language Teaching (ELT) professionals to share quick lesson ideas and pointers to valuable resources.

2.3 Qualities of Successful Professional Learners:

When adult education began to emerge as a professional field in the 1920s, researchers began exploring questions about the adult learner and the most effective ways for them to learn (Merriam 2001: 3-13). Kathleen (2008: 137) emphasizes that the needs of adult learners should be considered when designing educational environments, as adults are increasingly engaging with these settings.

Diane and Marti (2011: 123) highlight that using authentic materials is a key feature of Communicative Language Teaching. Allowing students to practice language comprehension in real-world contexts is seen as valuable. Similarly, Fukkink et al. (2005: 54-75) offer several suggestions for addressing both students' needs and current trends in English language instruction.

For developing teachers, professional learning profiles involve two phases. The first step is identifying the characteristics that reflect the underlying dimensions of professional learning orientation. This is done through exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, where teachers' responses are grouped according to similarities in questionnaire items. This process results in a more concise set of underlying dimensions, which can then be used to compare teachers' professional learning methods and values.



The second phase involves cluster analysis, where respondents are grouped based on their learning orientation. The goal of this stage is to identify distinct clusters of teachers with similar learning profiles, focusing on the dimensions of teachers' learning practices and values that were revealed through the factor analysis. This allows for a deeper understanding of different professional learning approaches.

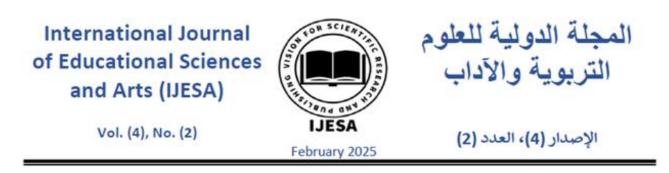
2.4 Higher Reading Requirements for Online Learning:

According to Kathleen (2008: 91), in a traditional classroom, much is communicated through language, facial expressions, and body language. In online courses, more reading is required to compensate for the absence of these non-verbal cues. However, it would be misleading to view the virtual classroom as merely a reading environment. Typically, the teacher posts lessons along with suggested readings, whereas, in traditional settings, information is conveyed through ongoing lectures and written notes, as Girash (2011: 1–5) explains. While presentations may be delivered in person, reading and writing remain central tasks in both traditional and online learning environments. Proficiency in writing is crucial for online learning, as effective communication with classmates and instructors relies on expressive writing that clearly conveys meaning (Meskill, 2009: 51–63).

John Lyons (2002: 257) suggests that teaching materials for primary school children can be enhanced by focusing not only on vocabulary but also on grammar, aiming to build linguistic competence. Similarly, Marianne (2001: 477), in her discussion on "Computers in Language Teaching," emphasizes that "effective teaching methodology relies more on sound pedagogy than on access to any specific form of computer technology."

Regarding feedback quality and response time, Steinkuehler (2006: 97–102) notes that in traditional classrooms, feedback is often immediate. However, in a virtual environment, responses may take at least 24 hours. Allowing four or more peers to

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comment on an assignment can help mitigate this delay, though instructor feedback ultimately plays a key role in fostering a sense of community and support for students.

2.5 Using Computers for Language Learning and Teaching:

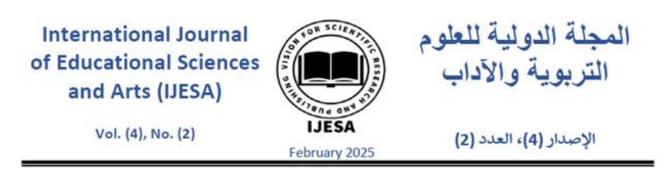
According to Carol, as cited by Robert (2010: 539), computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is the exploration and application of computers in language teaching and learning, addressing a broad range of concerns, with a primary focus on evaluating pedagogies implemented through technology. Robert (2010: 43) further argues that applied linguists must develop a deeper understanding of computer technology, statistical applications, sociocultural influences on research, and innovative approaches to analyzing linguistic data.

Marianne (2001: 477) emphasizes that effective teaching methodology relies more on sound pedagogy than on access to specific forms of computer technology. The technologies available for language instruction include interactive tutorials designed for language learning, electronic communication tools, websites offering resources and opportunities for interaction in the target language, and linguistic tools that assist with grammar and spelling.

Marianne (2001: 10) also outlines key considerations for teachers when making decisions about approaches, methods, techniques, and materials. These considerations include assessing student needs, understanding instructional limitations, considering students' attitudes and learning preferences, and designing resources and activities aligned with these factors. Additionally, she underscores the importance of evaluating students' language acquisition methodologies.

According to Ropert (2010: 547), for research and practice in CALL to make meaningful contributions to language teaching and learning theory, applied linguists must continuously update their understanding of effective CALL

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activities, considering advancements in both technology and language teaching theory

2.6 Modern Materials in Teaching Language:

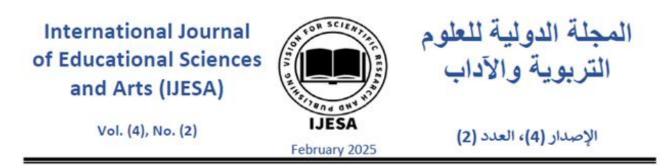
By the early 1990s, applied linguistics had come to be widely regarded as a multidisciplinary field, drawing from various disciplines beyond linguistics, such as education, sociology, anthropology, political science, and English studies. According to Robert (2010: 37), numerous advancements in applied linguistics over the past two decades are expected to continue shaping the field. These advancements primarily focus on language learning methods, interaction patterns during learning, and teacher-student dynamics. Additionally, there has been a shift in the development of language teachers.

Communicative orientations, which emphasize authenticity and natural language input, have sometimes led to a misunderstanding of the true objectives of the language classroom and overlooked useful frameworks for teaching languages effectively.

Today, technology is extensively integrated into both teaching and learning processes. It is no longer considered an optional addition but has become a standard feature of educational infrastructure worldwide. This shift has transformed how resources are used in classrooms. Materials now demonstrate how "teachers as authors" can ensure cohesive and efficient course design by creating their own materials. Computers, much like traditional blackboards or whiteboards, come in many formats, with a wide range of software, and are often seen as indispensable tools in education.

Penny Ur (2012:212) highlights websites that provide educators with an abundance of lesson plans and instructional resources. Some examples of these resources are readily available for teachers to enhance their classroom experience.

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- 1. Reading books or content from websites that teach English.
- 2. Listening to texts as podcasts or You Tube videos.
- 3. Worksheets, tests, exercises, and the like.
- 4. Email has a wide range of uses. In the classroom, mobile phones are frequently viewed as an annoyance.
- 5. Digital devices, such as the majority of smartphones, can be used to createaudio and video recordings. The teacher can record the students' performance to be played back at a later time, or the students can make their own sound recordings or video clips.

2.7 Motivation and Management:

All students, regardless of their academic level, require and deserve engaging learning environments, stimulating materials, and opportunities to study in contexts that promote collaboration with classmates, teachers, and the broader community. In today's digital age, students navigate online spaces for various purposes, including entertainment.

According to Jack and Theodore (2014: 28), instructional strategies should adapt teaching methods to suit individual learning characteristics. Moreover, selecting highly engaging content can significantly enhance student motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000: 72–73), as cited by Brian and Hitomi (2010: 54–55), explain that **integrated regulation** represents the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation. This occurs when externally imposed rules are fully integrated into one's self-concept, aligning with personal values and desires. While integrated regulation shares similarities with intrinsic motivation, it is considered extrinsic because the motivation arises from pursuing specific goals rather than from inherent satisfaction.

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Van Lier (2003: 51), referenced by Diane and Marti (2011: 231), states that "a manager of learning is concerned with the quality, values, and ideals we aim to promote in our educational activities." Given this perspective, it is essential to recognize the diverse range of learning motivations. Undergraduates often view motivation as instrumental, with instructors observing a preference for more writing assignments in course materials due to a strong emphasis on written exams.

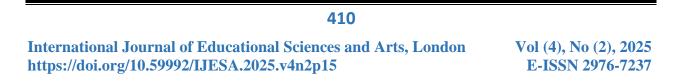
Michal and Catherine (2009: 354) highlight that influential factors affecting learning include the availability of support staff, motivation, facilities, computer literacy, and workload pressure. They caution against administrators prioritizing investment in "tangible" resources, such as equipment, over investing in human resources, which are equally vital for effective education.

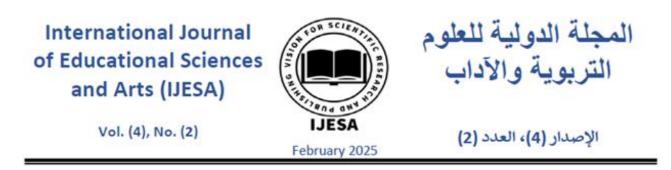
2.8 Teachers and Learners' Needs:

According to Diane and Marti (2011: 233), teachers must engage in practice inquiries to transition from ideology to inquiry. They need to be open to learning about the methods and findings of others, while also carefully considering their own actions and motivations. To continuously discover or develop the best approaches suited to their unique contexts, teachers must collaborate with others and experiment with various strategies, taking into account the characteristics of their students and the educational environment in which they teach.

Rebecca (2009: 66) asserts that providing high-quality education requires a keen awareness of learners' needs. One effective way to achieve this is through student evaluations. Although some argue that students are often unaware of their own needs, numerous studies have demonstrated the validity and reliability of student feedback. Failing to understand students' needs could result in missing out on the support they require to succeed.

Naturally, needs analysis in educational programs focuses on identifying students'





learning needs. Once these needs are determined, they are translated into learning objectives, which serve as the foundation for developing instructional materials, learning activities, assessments, and program evaluation methods (Michael and Catherine, 2009: 269).

2.9 The Impact of Utilizing Technology:

Freeman and Anderson (2011: 199) highlight that technology has long played a significant role in language teaching and learning by providing valuable resources. Trude (2010a: 443-459) examines the integration of natural language processing (NLP) and artificial intelligence (AI) into Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) systems, such as English-Tutors for German learners. These techniques aim to create personalized learning experiences that closely resemble human-to-human interactions, moving beyond traditional CALL methods. NLP is essential for enabling computers to understand human language.

Steven et al. (2009: 802-821) note that extensive research and pedagogical experimentation regarding the use of technology in second (L2) and foreign language education have been conducted in recent years. Much of this research has documented the effectiveness of technology in classrooms and its direct impact on learning outcomes.

Rebecca (2009: 688–697) argues that popular media and digital technologies cultivate skills that are essential for meaningful engagement in an increasingly technologically and globally integrated society. Similarly, Ranalli (2009: 163) emphasizes that technology facilitates sharing; collaboration, and communication, empowering students to actively participate in their education rather than passively absorb information. It is crucial to provide students with tools that enable them to effectively utilize collaborative applications for this important educational component.



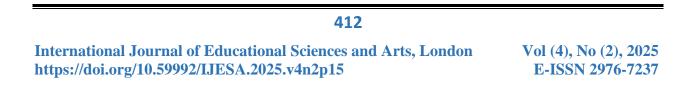
Sarah (2014: 271–284) discusses how online gaming, which has gained popularity since the mid-2000s, creates optimal conditions for language learning, whether for first or second language acquisition. Contrary to the misconception that internet games are merely distractions, numerous studies demonstrate their potential to facilitate learning and communication, including language acquisition.

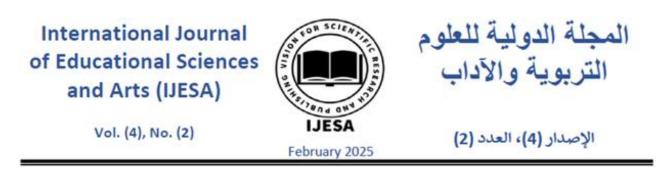
Mehra, Merkel, and Bishop (2004: 121) note that creativity often involves viewing situations from new perspectives. They address the evolving concept of 21st-century skills, highlighting essential abilities such as teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking in today's world.

Robert (2011: 19–35) explores the use of fully virtual, hybrid, or web-supported classes for online language learning, noting that the language learning community—especially within computer-assisted language acquisition—is increasingly taking these formats seriously. The discussion emphasizes how tutorials, social computing, and language-learning games can enhance language acquisition when effectively integrated into the curriculum.

As Jack and Theodore (2014: 339–40) point out, technology provides opportunities to reduce dependence on traditional classroom learning and the instructor's teaching methods:

- a. Giving students more exposure to English.
- b. Expanding global chances for contact with English language learners, native speakers, and speakers of English as a second language.
- c. Giving students the chance to concentrate on specific abilities likespeaking or reading.
- d. Boosting motivation, since students who use technology-based learningtend to be more motivated and have less discipline issues.





- e. Granting access to content that is more captivating.
- f. Encouraging learning away from the classroom.

3. Conclusions

The fundamental elements of the learning process consist of the teacher, the learner, and the subject matter. Based on the information available and an exploration of contemporary approaches to teaching English that meet learners' needs, the researcher arrives at the following conclusions:

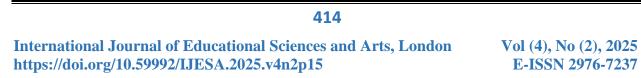
- 1. The core components of the learning process are the teacher, the student, and the subject matter.
- 2. To inspire and facilitate the study of all subjects, particularly English, it is essential to use materials that enhance foreign language learning. Examples of such materials include computers, televisions, smartphones, data projectors, and the internet.
- 3. There is a connection between the subject matter and the needs of the learner.
- 4. Psychological research indicates that engaging multiple senses in a course promotes comprehension. Recent developments in educational materials can enhance learning and motivation.
- 5. Modern approaches to teaching English are designed to accommodate the needs of students.
- 6. Communicative online assignments support second language learning by providing students with opportunities to create spoken and written texts, allowing them to observe and restructure language.
- 7. A focus on learner autonomy, learning strategies, learning styles, and the opportunities presented by technology fosters a deeper understanding of the



learner's role in language acquisition.

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