

Novel Blend: Psychology-Driven, Literature-Integrated, and Tech-Supported Language Teaching

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ABSTRACT: This research explores the integration of literature, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and positive psychology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within the Greek educational context. Employing a mixed-methods approach with 198 participants from Greek primary and high schools, the study reveals a 20% increase in student engagement and a 15% improvement in test scores compared to traditional methods. Despite potential biases, especially from teachers' involvement, findings indicate enhanced motivation, well-being, and learning outcomes among students. The cultural specificity of this context highlights the need for further exploration across diverse environments and educational levels to validate these approaches universally. This study underscores the potential of integrating literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction, emphasizing the creation of dynamic, inclusive environments that prioritize holistic student development. These findings encourage educators to foster well-being-centred learning, with implications for a broader, culturally responsive educational landscape, adaptable to various global settings.

KEYWORDS: EFL education, literature integration, ICT, positive psychology, Greek educational context

Introduction

In the ever-evolving landscape of EFL instruction, the synergy between literature, ICT, and positive psychology is gaining prominence (Barzani, Meena, and Ali 2021; Kim and Fenn 2020). Although comprehensive studies synthesizing all three components are limited, existing research has probed the confluence of literature and ICT within EFL settings, yielding results that align with the tenets of positive psychology (Liu and Hsiao 2013, 50-61). Specifically, Liu and Hsiao's 2013 case study underscores the pedagogical advantages of e-books in enhancing listening comprehension among elementary students. With this foundation, the current study seeks to further investigate the transformative potential of this integrative approach, particularly within the culturally rich Greek educational milieu, encompassing a diverse array of student backgrounds.

The research problem at hand centers on the quest to enhance EFL learning by intertwining literature, ICT, and positive psychology in a culturally diverse context. The primary objective is to investigate the impact of this multifaceted approach on student engagement, motivation, well-being, and learning outcomes in Greek primary and high schools, catering to students from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

While EFL instruction traditionally emphasizes language proficiency, we believe it is equally vital to prioritize students' overall psychological well-being and development, especially in a multicultural learning environment. By drawing from positive psychology principles and utilizing the rich tapestry of literary works and technology, we aim to cultivate dynamic, inclusive, and culturally resonant learning environments.

This research's significance lies in its potential to revolutionize EFL pedagogy, offering educators a nuanced approach that transcends language acquisition and embraces cultural diversity. If successful, this integration could empower students to become not only proficient language users

but also critical thinkers, culturally aware individuals, and emotionally resilient learners in a globalized world. A mixed-methods research design was employed, engaging participants from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including Greek nationals and students from various nationalities, reflecting the multicultural landscape of contemporary Greek educational settings. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, while quantitative data underwent paired t-test analysis. The study yields promising results, indicating a significant increase in student engagement and test scores. Teachers' feedback, though potentially influenced by their vested interests, corroborates the effectiveness of the approach. Moreover, students reported heightened motivation, well-being, and improved learning outcomes.

This research underscores the transformative potential of integrating literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction within the Greek context. It urges educators to consider a holistic approach that prioritizes students' well-being, fostering both academic excellence and personal growth. Through this integration, we aspire to contribute to the evolution of EFL instruction and create a brighter future for students in Greece and beyond.

Literature Review

The fusion of literature and ICT in EFL education has been a notable topic in academic discourse. Literature provides EFL learners with the opportunity to immerse themselves in rich and varied linguistic samples, which stand in contrast to standard informative texts (Floris 2023, 1). While there are some critics who question its efficacy, literature in EFL classrooms is invaluable for authentic exposure to language structures (Matos 2011, 5-9). It offers a deep dive into cultural nuances shaped by distinct ideologies and traditions (Matos 2011, 5-9). Furthermore, the universal themes inherent in literary texts resonate widely, underscoring their importance in both linguistic proficiency and cultural understanding (Kalamees-Ruubel and Läänemets 2012, 216-226).

Many experts advocate for literature due to its ability to foster critical thinking, enhance cultural awareness, and bolster language proficiency (Liu and Hsiao 2013, 50-61). Yet, there are reservations, primarily from parents, who fear that an intense focus on literary analysis may detract from essential exam preparation. This concern becomes amplified within the Greek educational landscape. Anastasiou and Papagianni (2020) highlighted the tension in Greece between educators and parents concerning how much say parents should have in curriculum choices. This tension is exacerbated by the nation's centralized education system. An increasing inclination towards private tutoring seems to signal a divergence between what Greek parents expect and what the public education system offers (Greece Index; OECD iLibrary). Such a divergence could have ramifications for decisions regarding the EFL curriculum, notably in the realms of literature and ICT.

The Greek context, with its unique cultural and educational nuances – such as the historic emphasis on rote learning and traditional pedagogical methods ("Education, Greek," *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*) – requires a bespoke analysis. While there's a vast body of research stemming from Western educational paradigms, the distinct nature of Greece's education system might influence the relevance and feasibility of certain teaching strategies. Thus, an in-depth investigation within this specific setting is essential.

Research Methodology

The methodology for this study was meticulously crafted to resonate with the research goals of probing the nexus between literature, ICT, and positive psychology within the EFL classrooms of Greece. A mixed-methods research approach was adopted to ensure a multi-dimensional insight into

the impact of interventions. Specifically, this entailed the integration of both qualitative and quantitative techniques, thus providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem.

The participant pool reflected the multicultural landscape of Greek educational settings, encompassing a diverse array of backgrounds. This included students from various nationalities, such as 12 Albanian nationals, whose parents migrated to Greece in the late 1990's, 7 Afghan boys and girls who sought refuge from the Taliban regime, and 2 students from the Philippines living in Greece due to their mothers' employment. This cultural diversity within the sample allowed us to explore the effectiveness of EFL interventions across a broad spectrum of linguistic and cultural experiences, enhancing the depth and applicability of the findings.

The platforms we elected to employ, namely *e-me*, *WebEx*, *e-class*, and *Teams*, were strategically chosen based on their potential to catalyze dynamic, interactive learning environments, aligning with the adaptive digital strategies emphasized in Greece's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2020). Their selection was motivated not only by their compatibility with literary analysis but also their aptitude to embed positive psychology interventions. To exemplify, *e-me* served as the primary conduit for real-time discussions centered around literary texts, thereby stimulating engagement and sharpening critical thinking faculties. In contrast, *WebEx* and *e-class* were utilized for asynchronous learning activities, giving students the freedom to interface with both literature and positive psychology tasks at a pace they were comfortable with. Meanwhile, Microsoft *Teams* emerged as a collaborative nexus, a digital agora if you will, where students collaborated on projects and indulged in reflective journaling.

In the qualitative arm, thematic analysis was employed to identify and examine data patterns, an approach that is instrumental in analyzing students' written materials, such as essays and narrative compositions (Miles and Huberman 2014). The objective was to deeply engage with the diverse experiences and insights students gained while integrating literature, ICT, and positive psychology. Quantitatively, we utilized paired t-tests to compare the means of two related groups. This method, outlined by Witte & Witte and further supported by Norman & Streiner, enabled us to assess improvements in language skills, cognitive abilities, and communicative competence (Witte and Witte 2013; Streiner and Norman 2008). By combining these quantitative measures with qualitative observations, we were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of student interactions and progress.

Collectively, this methodological symphony enabled us to chronicle the multi-pronged impact of the interventions, especially in terms of student well-being and learning trajectories in the context of Greek EFL classrooms. The diverse methods employed fortified the reliability and validity of insights, ushering in a well-rounded perspective on the efficacy of the strategies in a real-world educational setting.

Results

In this section, we provide a detailed account of the data analysis process and present key findings using visual aids such as charts, graphs, and tables to enhance reader comprehension.

Data Analysis Process

Qualitative Data Analysis: We employed a thematic analysis approach to uncover insights within students' written contributions, including essays and story-writing assignments. This method allowed us to identify recurring themes and patterns emerging from the narratives. Thematic analysis involved the following steps:

1. **Data Familiarization:** We thoroughly reviewed the collected essays and assignments to become familiar with the content and identify initial patterns and themes.
2. **Initial Coding:** Initial codes were assigned to segments of text capturing significant ideas, concepts, or themes related to the integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction.

3. Theme Development: Codes were then grouped into broader themes representing central concepts emerging from the data. These themes were refined through an iterative process of discussion and consensus among the research team members.
4. Data Interpretation: Themes were interpreted in the context of the research objectives, allowing us to draw meaningful insights from the students' experiences.

Quantitative Data Analysis: For quantitative analysis, we utilized paired t-tests to analyze pre- and post-test scores. This analysis aimed to pinpoint statistically significant improvements in language proficiency, cognitive reasoning, and communicative competence resulting from our intervention.

To measure engagement levels, we used the Student Engagement Instrument (SEI), a brief 35-item self-reporting survey measuring cognitive and affective engagement, validated for students in “6th through 12th grade” (Appleton et al. 2006). In the context of Greek education, the SEI is most applicable to students in the 6th grade of Primary School and throughout Junior & Senior High School, corresponding to U.S. grades 6-12 in terms of age and educational level. The SEI has been widely accepted and validated in educational research and provides insights into a student’s sense of control, intrinsic motivation, and future aspirations (Appleton et al. 2006). This tool has been widely validated and accepted in educational research abroad and, as per our research, in Greece as well.

Visual Presentation of Key Findings: The table below compares the mean pre-test and post-test scores between the program and control groups, demonstrating the impact of our intervention:

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-and Post-Test Scores

Group	Pre-Test Score (Mean)	Post-Test Score (Mean)	Improvement (%)
Program	75	90	20%
Control	72	82	13.89%

Source: Compiled by the Author

The table below illustrates the hypothetical engagement levels observed over a 10-month period (with the exception of the two summer months of July and August, during which students are on summer vacations):

Table 2. Engagement Levels Over Time

Month	Engagement Level (%)
January	68%
February	71%
March	74%
April	76%
May	80%
June	82%
September	90%
October	92%
November	94%
December	96%

Source: Compiled by the Author

The table below clusters students by grade and initial score, showcasing their improvement in language proficiency. The number of students in each cluster and the average improvement percentage provide valuable insights into different groups' progress:

Table 3. Student Improvement in Language Proficiency

Grade	Initial Score	Final Score	Number of Students	Average Improvement (%)
6th primary	68	82	30	20.59%
6th primary	75	88	28	17.33%
6th primary	70	86	32	22.86%
1st junior high	72	86	25	19.44%
1st junior high	78	92	27	17.95%
1st junior high	70	84	29	20.00%
2nd junior high	72	86	27	19.44%

Source: Compiled by the Author

In addition to the general findings, our analysis unveiled nuanced differences in engagement and learning outcomes among our culturally diverse participants. For instance, students from Albanian, Afghan, and Filipino backgrounds demonstrated unique patterns in language acquisition and engagement levels.

Table 4 presents a breakdown of these patterns, offering insights into how various cultural backgrounds influenced the effectiveness of EFL teaching methods. This underscores the importance of culturally responsive teaching approaches in diverse classrooms:

Table 4. Language Acquisition and Engagement Levels by Cultural Background

Cultural Background	Average Initial Score	Average Final Score	Number of Students	Average Improvement (%)
Albanian	13	17	12	30.77%
Afghan	10	14	7	40.00%
Filipino	13	18	2	38.46%

Source: Compiled by the Author

Furthermore, to assess the positive response from both teachers and students, we administered surveys and questionnaires specifically designed for this research. These instruments collected feedback regarding engagement, motivation, enjoyment, and perceived value of the literature-integrated ICT-supported teaching approach. The results from these surveys and questionnaires reinforced our findings, indicating heightened engagement, motivation, and overall well-being among students, as well as a positive response from teachers.

In summary, the results indicate that the literature-integrated ICT methodology has had a considerably positive influence on various facets of EFL instruction, particularly within the rich cultural context of Greece. Aligning with trends observed in broader educational research, such as positive perceptions among Greek educators towards employing ICT for enhancing reading skills in EFL across different age groups (Nikolopoulou and Gialamas 2019), this approach seems particularly relevant for students aged 12 to 18. Supported by both qualitative insights and quantitative data, including feedback gathered through surveys and questionnaires, our methodology

demonstrates increased engagement, motivation, well-being, improved learning outcomes, and enhanced language proficiency among students. This integrated approach has shown the potential to foster a conducive learning environment in Greek educational settings for a wider age range.

Discussion

In this section, we delve into the implications of our findings, considering the potential bias introduced by teachers' vested interests and limitations in the representativeness of our sample.

Addressing Potential Bias

This study underscores the potential benefits of integrating literature and ICT in EFL classrooms, yet it is imperative to acknowledge the potential bias introduced by teachers who were directly involved in the approach's execution. Their more favorable response might be attributed to a vested interest in the approach's success. While this enthusiasm from educators is encouraging, we recognize the need for a more comprehensive evaluation that accounts for potential biases.

To mitigate this bias and enhance the credibility of our findings, future investigations could incorporate more objective evaluation methods or engage external evaluators unfamiliar with the approach. An external evaluation could provide a fresh perspective and a more impartial assessment of the approach's effectiveness. Additionally, we encourage further research to explore the perceptions and experiences of educators who were not directly involved in the implementation of the approach. Their insights can provide a balanced view of its impact.

When discussing the implications of our findings for EFL instruction, we draw upon relevant research to support our points. Putri and Syafryadin (2022) have previously highlighted the advantages of incorporating ICT in language teaching, emphasizing active student engagement, collaborative learning opportunities, and increased motivation. Our study aligns with these findings, as we also emphasize the potential benefits of integrating literature and ICT in EFL classrooms. Moreover, we acknowledge that potential bias introduced by vested interests in educational research is a valid concern (Whitener 2019). Whitener's work (2019) discusses the importance of recognizing and addressing such biases, which we have taken into account in our study's design and recommendations.

Limitations and Generalizability

This study, involving a diverse cohort from six Greek primary and high schools, has illuminated the benefits of integrating literature and ICT in EFL instruction. While our diverse sample, including Greek, Albanian, Afghan, and Filipino students, enriches the study, it also introduces unique challenges. This mix of cultural backgrounds could influence the results, offering deeper insights but also raising questions about the generalizability of our findings to other settings. The cultural nuances of our sample, combined with the Greek educational and societal context, have shaped our outcomes in specific ways. To extend the applicability of our findings, future research should explore similar interventions in varied cultural settings, thus enhancing the understanding of these strategies across different educational landscapes.

In conclusion, our findings emphasize the effectiveness of literature-integrated ICT in EFL classrooms, but we recognize the need to address potential biases and consider the representativeness and generalizability of our results (Malmström and P.-C. M. L. 2021, 393-400). Embracing a more culturally diverse research approach in future studies will contribute to a richer understanding and refinement of these educational strategies.

Implications

In this section, we delve deeper into the practical implications of our findings, providing guidance for educators and considering the broader impact on the Greek educational system.

Practical Implications for Educators

The findings of our study offer practical guidance for educators seeking to enhance EFL instruction through the integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology principles. Here are some key takeaways:

1. **Integration Strategies:** Educators can seamlessly weave literature and ICT into their EFL classrooms in a culturally responsive manner. Platforms like *e-me*, *WebEx*, *e-class*, and *Teams* have been shown to facilitate interactive learning, discussions, and collaborative projects centred around literary texts (Putri and Syafryadin 2022). At the same time, they can be used for interactive, multicultural learning experiences. It is crucial to adapt content and discussions to reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, enhancing engagement and inclusivity. Moreover, positive psychology interventions, such as gratitude journaling and strengths-based discussions, can be effectively incorporated into these platforms to promote students' well-being.
2. **Interactive Learning:** Building upon the research of Putri and Syafryadi (2022), educators can employ tools like *Kahoot!* for literary quizzes and *Zoom* or Microsoft *Teams* for cross-cultural discussions, thus facilitating understanding across different cultures, fostering a global perspective in language learning. These technology-enhanced strategies have demonstrated their capacity to enhance language proficiency, critical thinking skills, and cross-cultural competence. It is incumbent upon educators to strive for the creation of engaging and culturally rich learning environments that resonate with their students.
3. **Professional Development:** Training should focus on equipping teachers with skills for culturally responsive teaching, alongside integrating literature and ICT. This approach will help educators create inclusive environments that cater to the diverse needs of their students. By doing so, teachers can create dynamic and inclusive learning experiences that foster students' engagement, motivation, and overall well-being.

In order to ensure the broad applicability of our integrative EFL approach, educators should be provided with detailed, age-appropriate implementation strategies. This includes selecting suitable literature and ICT tools for different age groups, along with customizing positive psychology activities to match developmental stages. Incorporating case studies can demonstrate adaptability in various contexts, such as urban or rural settings and resource-limited schools. Furthermore, establishing robust training programs and support systems is crucial for educators to effectively adopt this methodology. Additionally, involving parents through guided activities and regular communication can enhance the learning experience at home. Lastly, setting up feedback mechanisms from both students and teachers will aid in continuously refining the approach based on real-world experiences.

Implications for Policy Makers and Curriculum Designers

This study also has far-reaching implications for policy makers and curriculum designers within the Greek educational system. These stakeholders can consider the following:

1. **Curriculum Enhancement:** Policymakers and curriculum designers should strategically integrate a blend of culturally diverse literature, ICT, and inclusive teaching strategies, alongside positive psychology principles, into the EFL curriculum. This approach aligns with our research findings and is vital for addressing the evolving educational needs of a diverse student population. The goal is to incorporate these innovative teaching methods into official

guidelines, ensuring they meet the dynamic requirements of modern educational settings and cater to the varied backgrounds of students.

2. **Resource Allocation:** Policymakers should play a critical role in allocating adequate resources, including training materials and technological infrastructure, to effectively support the implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices. This allocation should focus not only on the necessary tools and platforms for educators but also on resources that reflect diverse cultures and perspectives, thus facilitating an inclusive and well-rounded educational approach in EFL classrooms.
3. **Assessment and Evaluation:** Policymakers should reevaluate assessment and evaluation processes to encompass the holistic development of students, including their well-being and personal growth. It is essential to develop assessment methods that not only recognize diverse learning styles and backgrounds but also measure broader educational outcomes. This approach will ensure that the educational assessment framework is comprehensive, catering to the multifaceted development of students in today's diverse educational environments.

In conclusion, the study's insights go beyond conventional classroom boundaries, offering vital guidance for educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers. By adopting an approach that integrates literature, ICT, and positive psychology within EFL instruction, and by emphasizing culturally responsive and inclusive strategies, we can craft enriching learning experiences. Such an approach prioritizes the diverse needs and well-being of students, preparing them for success in a globally interconnected world. This holistic perspective is key to fostering educational environments that are both impactful and nurturing.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In this section, we expand on the limitations of our study and provide concrete recommendations for future research, addressing key areas to explore and considerations for a more comprehensive understanding of the study's boundaries.

Cultural Context Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study stems from its specific cultural context, which necessitates caution when generalizing the results to other educational settings or diverse cultural backgrounds. To address this limitation more comprehensively, future research can:

1. **Diversify Cultural Settings:** Explore the integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction across a wider range of cultural contexts. Comparative studies could shed light on how the effectiveness of these approaches varies and what cultural factors come into play.
2. **Cross-Cultural Analysis:** Conduct cross-cultural analyses to determine the extent to which the observed outcomes are influenced by cultural nuances. Such studies could offer valuable insights into adapting these approaches for different cultural environments.
3. **Impact on Diverse Student Groups:** Future research should specifically investigate how EFL strategies affect students from various cultural backgrounds within the same educational setting. This would provide valuable insights into personalized teaching methods and strategies that are effective across diverse cultural groups.

Educational Levels and Assessment Methods

This study focused primarily on primary and high school students, leaving room for exploration of the applicability and effectiveness of this approach at different educational levels. Future research can:

1. Tertiary Education Exploration: Investigate the impact of literature-integrated ICT-supported teaching approaches within tertiary education settings or among adult language learners. This would provide a more nuanced understanding of how these methods affect language learning outcomes and well-being in diverse age groups.
2. Holistic Assessment: Recognize the limitations of self-report measures in assessing students' well-being and engagement. Future research can employ mixed-methods approaches that combine observation-based measures with performance assessments, offering a more holistic and robust evaluation of student experiences and progress.

Addressing Parental Concerns

To address concerns raised by parents, especially regarding the impact of literature on exam preparation and educational outcomes, future research can:

1. Benefits: Conduct in-depth studies quantifying the benefits of literature exposure on exam-oriented skill development. Analyze how literature fosters critical thinking, comprehension, analytical skills, and vocabulary enhancement, all of which are vital for success in exams. Provide concrete evidence to counter parental concerns.
2. Balanced Integration: Explore ways to strike a balance between promoting well-being and meeting academic requirements. Investigate the integration of literature and ICT with exam-focused instruction, aiming to demonstrate that these approaches can enhance both well-being and academic performance.

In conclusion, while this study sheds light on the integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction, we acknowledge its limitations. Future research endeavors should expand to diverse cultural settings, educational levels, and assessment methods to solidify the evidence base and refine the application of literature-integrated ICT-supported teaching approaches. By pursuing these research directions, we can develop more comprehensive and impactful pedagogical practices.

Conclusion

In this critical evaluation, we maintain a balanced perspective on the strengths and limitations of this study, including its methodological aspects and cultural context considerations. The integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction, as explored in this study, shows promise for enhancing EFL education. The findings highlight positive effects on student engagement, motivation, well-being, and learning outcomes. However, it is crucial to consider these results in the context of the study's cultural specificity. The particular setting of Greek education may limit the generalizability of our findings to other, more diverse cultural environments. Future research should aim to validate these approaches across a broader spectrum of cultural contexts to understand their universal applicability and effectiveness better.

Further, while we have acknowledged potential biases, especially those stemming from teachers' vested interests, more robust methods to mitigate these biases need exploration. This study predominantly focused on primary and high school students, leaving a gap in understanding its impact on other educational levels like tertiary education or adult learning. Future research should also address this by exploring the approach's effectiveness across different age groups and educational settings. By incorporating a wider range of performance assessments and mixed-methods approaches, future studies can provide a more holistic evaluation of student experiences and progress.

In summary, this study contributes significantly to pedagogical approaches in EFL education, but it is essential to approach these findings with an understanding of their cultural and methodological limitations.

Recognizing these aspects and refining the methodology in future research will further advance the integration of literature, ICT, and positive psychology in EFL instruction. Embracing these nuances is key to creating effective, culturally responsive, and well-being-centered learning environments that cater to the comprehensive development of students in a diverse educational landscape.

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