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ENHANCING SOFT SKILLS IN TEACHING ENGLISH: A STUDY UTILIZING PADLET APPLICATION AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract. This research aims to examine the efficacy of utilizing the Padlet application to enhance soft skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education among students at International Information Technology University. Soft skills, such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, are crucial competencies for students navigating the globalized workforce. Technology integration in education has become increasingly important, and Padlet provides a versatile platform for collaborative learning and content sharing. This study adopts a quantitative approach, employing a pre/post-observation design to evaluate the influence of Padlet usage on the development of soft skills among EFL students. Participants are randomly assigned to either an experimental group, engaging with Padlet activities, or a control group receiving traditional instruction. Validated instrument, including performance evaluations, are used to measure soft skills before and after the intervention. Quantitative data analysis techniques are utilized to compare mean scores between groups and assess the effectiveness of Padlet in fostering soft skills. Expected outcomes encompass improvements in communication clarity, increased collaboration in group tasks, enhanced critical thinking through information synthesis, and greater creativity in idea generation. The findings of this study hold implications for EFL educators seeking innovative approaches to skill development and for institutions aiming to effectively integrate technology into language education. By exploring the role of Padlet in enhancing soft skills within the specific context of EFL education at International Information Technology University, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of technology-supported learning and its impact on student outcomes.

Key words: teaching, learning, English language, technology, Padlet, students, development, skills

Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education plays a crucial role in preparing students for success in an increasingly interconnected world. As globalization continues to drive international communication and collaboration, proficiency in English has become a valuable asset for individuals pursuing academic, professional, and personal opportunities [1]. However, mastering linguistic competence alone is no longer sufficient; students must also develop a range of soft skills to thrive in diverse cultural and professional environments [2].

Soft skills encompass a variety of non-technical abilities that enable individuals to effectively interact, communicate, and collaborate with others [3]. These skills include communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, among others. In today's competitive job market, employers increasingly value soft skills alongside technical expertise, recognizing their importance in fostering innovation, problem-solving, and teamwork [4].

Recognizing the significance of soft skills development in EFL education, educators are continually seeking innovative approaches to integrate skill-building

activities into their teaching practices. One such approach involves leveraging technology to enhance learning experiences and promote skill acquisition among students [5]. Among the myriad of educational technologies available, Padlet—an online collaborative platform—has emerged as a promising tool for fostering interactive and engaging learning environments [6]. Padlet allows users to create digital bulletin boards, or "walls," where they can share ideas, resources, and multimedia content in real-time.

In the context of EFL education, Padlet offers several advantages for both educators and students. Its user-friendly interface and customizable features make it accessible to learners of all proficiency levels, allowing for personalized and collaborative learning experiences [7]. Padlet facilitates active participation, encourages peer interaction, and promotes student engagement through its interactive and visually appealing interface [8]. Moreover, Padlet's versatility enables educators to design a wide range of activities to target specific language skills and learning objectives, making it a valuable addition to the EFL classroom toolkit.

Despite the potential benefits of Padlet in EFL education, there remains a gap in the literature regarding its effectiveness in fostering soft skills development among students. While previous research has explored the impact of technology integration on language learning outcomes [9], few studies have specifically examined the role of Padlet in enhancing soft skills within the EFL context. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating the efficacy of Padlet application in promoting soft skills development among students at International Information Technology University.

The study employs a quantitative research design, utilizing a pre/post-observation approach to assess the impact of Padlet on soft skills development. Four groups of students, each consisting of 15 participants, are randomly assigned to either an experimental group or a control group. The experimental groups engage in Padlet-based activities designed to target specific soft skills, while the control groups receive traditional instruction methods. By comparing pre/post-observation scores between the experimental and control groups, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Padlet in enhancing soft skills in the EFL context.

The participants of this study are undergraduate students enrolled in EFL courses at International Information Technology University. As a diverse cohort representing various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, these students bring unique perspectives and experiences to the learning environment. By examining the impact of Padlet on soft skills development within this context, the study aims to provide valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges of integrating technology into EFL education.

Quantitative data analysis techniques, including a pre/post-observation approach, will be employed to analyze the collected data and determine the effectiveness of Padlet in fostering soft skills development. The study focuses on four key soft skills areas: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity. These skills are assessed using validated instruments, which is performance evaluations, administered before and after the intervention.

The findings of this study have implications for EFL educators, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers seeking to enhance soft skills development in language education. By exploring the potential of Padlet as a tool for promoting soft skills, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on technology-supported language learning and pedagogy. Additionally, the study provides practical recommendations for integrating Padlet into EFL curricula to facilitate holistic skill development among students.

This introduction establishes the significance of soft skills development in EFL education and highlights the potential of Padlet as a technology-enhanced learning tool. By employing a quantitative research design and focusing on four groups of students at International Information Technology University, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of Padlet in fostering soft skills development. The subsequent sections of the research will detail the methodology, results, and implications of the study, offering valuable insights for educators and stakeholders in the field of EFL education.

Hypothesis. It is hypothesized that incorporating the Padlet application into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education at International Information Technology University will result in notable advancements in the development of soft skills. Specifically, we anticipate that students who actively participate in Padlet activities will showcase improved communication skills, as evidenced by increased engagement in discussions and enhanced clarity in their expressions. Moreover, we expect to observe improvements in collaboration skills, as indicated by heightened involvement in group tasks and effective teamwork. Additionally, we predict that there will be progress in critical thinking abilities, demonstrated through the analysis and synthesis of information gathered from Padlet activities. Lastly, we hypothesize that the utilization of Padlet will foster creativity among EFL learners, as demonstrated by the generation of innovative ideas and solutions. Overall, we expect that the experimental groups utilizing Padlet will exhibit superior development of soft skills compared to the control groups, thus supporting the effectiveness of Padlet as a valuable tool for enhancing soft skills in the EFL classroom.

The field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has seen significant advancements in recent years, driven by a growing emphasis on the development of soft skills alongside linguistic proficiency. Soft skills, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, are essential competencies that enable individuals to effectively navigate diverse social, academic, and professional contexts. As such, educators are increasingly incorporating activities and interventions aimed at fostering soft skills development within the EFL classroom. In parallel, the integration of technology in education has provided new opportunities for enhancing learning experiences and promoting skill acquisition among students. Among the various technological tools available, Padlet—a collaborative online platform—has gained attention for its potential to facilitate interactive and engaging learning environments. This literature review explores the intersection of EFL education, soft skills development, and technology integration, with a specific focus on the role of Padlet in enhancing soft skills among students.

Soft Skills Development in EFL Education. Soft skills development has become a prominent focus in EFL education, as educators recognize the importance of preparing students for success in a rapidly changing global landscape. Communication skills, in particular, are essential for effective language use and interpersonal interaction. EFL classrooms provide opportunities for students to practice and refine their communication abilities through various activities such as discussions, presentations, and collaborative projects. Collaboration skills are also emphasized, as students engage in group work and cooperative learning tasks to achieve common goals. Additionally, critical thinking and creativity are increasingly valued in EFL education, as students are encouraged to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information in meaningful ways [10]. By integrating soft skills development into language learning experiences, educators aim to equip students with the competencies needed to succeed in both academic and professional domains [11].

Technology Integration in EFL Education. The integration of technology in EFL education has opened new avenues for enhancing teaching and learning experiences. Digital tools offer opportunities for interactive and personalized learning, catering to diverse student needs and preferences [12]. Mobile applications, online platforms, and multimedia resources provide access to authentic language materials and interactive activities, allowing students to engage with language in meaningful contexts. Moreover, technology-enhanced language learning environments promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning, empowering students to take ownership of their language learning journey. As technology continues to evolve, educators are exploring innovative ways to leverage digital tools to enhance language acquisition and promote holistic skill development among students [13].

Padlet as a Tool for Soft Skills Development. With Padlet, users may collaborate online by creating digital "walls," or bulletin boards, where they can share ideas, information, and multimedia content in real-time. Padlet provides educators with a flexible tool for creating engaging learning activities and increasing student engagement because of its user-friendly interface and adjustable features. Because of its versatility and accessibility, Padlet may be used in a variety of educational situations, including EFL instruction. Teachers may improve the development of soft skills in the EFL classroom by using Padlet to help students communicate, collaborate, think critically, and be creative. By creating collaborative spaces for brainstorming, discussion, and reflection, Padlet enables students to actively participate in their learning process and engage with course content in meaningful ways.

Empirical Research on Padlet in EFL Education. Even with all Padlet's apparent advantages for EFL instruction, there is still a dearth of empirical data on how well it really develops soft skills. We notice that studies on how Padlet affects EFL learners' creativity, critical thinking, teamwork, and communication has been done sparingly. Today's technologies provide insights into the broader benefits of digital learning for the acquisition of skills and language. It is well known that collaborative online learning environments, like Padlet, encourage student

engagement, communication, and knowledge exchange. Teachers may design interactive learning experiences that support the development of soft skills in addition to language acquisition by utilizing Padlet's capabilities.

Numerous interactive teaching techniques have emerged along with the evolution of technology in the classroom. Nowadays, contemporary methods of teaching are gradually taking the place of more conventional ones [14]. It is widely held that the utilization of digital resources in education may significantly improve student learning. The use of technology in educational environments may foster student inquiry, increase instructional efficiency, ease communication, and support students' self-expression [15]. Current research and publications highlight the benefits of computer-mediated communication as a technique for speeding up the acquisition of foreign languages as well. In addition, the integration of technology in EFL education offers new possibilities for enhancing soft skills development among students. Padlet, as a collaborative online platform, holds promise as a tool for promoting communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity within the EFL classroom. By creating interactive learning environments that engage students in meaningful activities and discussions, educators can foster holistic skill development and prepare students for success in a globalized world. However, further research is needed to empirically investigate the effectiveness of Padlet in EFL education and its impact on soft skills development. By building on existing research and exploring innovative approaches to technology integration, educators can continue to enhance learning experiences and promote comprehensive skill acquisition among EFL learners.

Materials and methods

This study will employ a pre/post-observation design and a control group. The four groups of participants will be randomly assigned to either the experimental group or the control group. Each group will undergo the same soft skills assessment measures at two points in time: before the intervention (pre-test) and after the intervention (post-observation). The experimental groups will engage in Padlet-based activities designed to target specific soft skills, while the control groups will receive traditional instruction methods without Padlet intervention.

The participants in this study will consist of undergraduate students enrolled in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses at International Information Technology University. A total of four groups, each comprising 15 students, will be recruited for the study. The participants will be selected using convenience sampling methods from various EFL courses offered at the university.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through active engagement and social interaction. This study also draws on the principles of collaborative learning and digital pedagogy, emphasizing the role of technology in enhancing educational experiences and outcomes.

The empirical research methods consist of the following:

1. Pre-test and Post-test Assessments: Quantitative data will be collected through pre-test and post-test assessments to measure changes in soft skills. These

assessments will utilize validated instruments such as performance evaluations and self-assessment surveys.

2. Observation: Four teachers will observe the participants' learning process using specific rubrics designed to evaluate communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills.

3. Intervention: The experimental groups will participate in Padlet-based activities, including online discussions, collaborative projects, brainstorming sessions, and reflective exercises. The control groups will follow traditional instructional methods without using Padlet.

The experimental groups will participate in Padlet-based activities designed to enhance communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills. These activities may include online discussions, collaborative projects, brainstorming sessions, and reflective exercises facilitated through Padlet. The instructor will provide guidance and support throughout the intervention period to ensure that participants engage effectively with the Padlet platform and complete the assigned tasks.

Data will be collected using quantitative measures to assess the impact of the Padlet intervention on soft skills development. Quantitative data will be collected through pre/post-observation assessments, consisting of validated instrument such as performance evaluations. Performance evaluations will assess participants' actual demonstration of soft skills through observable behaviors and outcomes.

In order to analyze the data, we will use methods pre/post-observation analysis to compare the scores before and after the intervention between the experimental and control groups in order to gain insights into the effectiveness of the Padlet intervention in enhancing soft skills development among the students.

Results and discussion

There were 60 undergraduate students who were involved in this study, with 80% male and 20% female. The age range of participants was between 17-18 years old. Four English language Elementary classes at International Information Technology University (IITU) who were enrolled for the second semester of academic year 2023–2024 were the subjects for this part of the study. Two of the classes were assigned as the experimental groups (EFL Intermediate 1&2, n = 30), and the other classes were the control groups (EFL Intermediate 3&4, n = 30).

First of all, we would like to start this section of the article by describing the research results which we have achieved. We utilized the pre/post-observation experimental design to test the effectiveness of the Padlet activities on enhancing participants' levels of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills (4C skills). The population in the research of data collection techniques is done through observation. Four teachers used the following criteria rubrics while observing the participants learning process (Table 1).

Table 1 - Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills assessment criteria rubrics

#	Skills	Range
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1	Very good	85-100
2	Good	70-84
3	Enough	55-69
4	Less	50-54
5	Poor	0-49

The experimental groups participated in Padlet-based activities designed to enhance communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills. These activities included online discussions, collaborative projects, brainstorming sessions, and reflective exercises facilitated through Padlet. The instructor provided guidance and support throughout the intervention period to ensure that participants engage effectively with the Padlet platform and complete the assigned tasks (Figure 2).

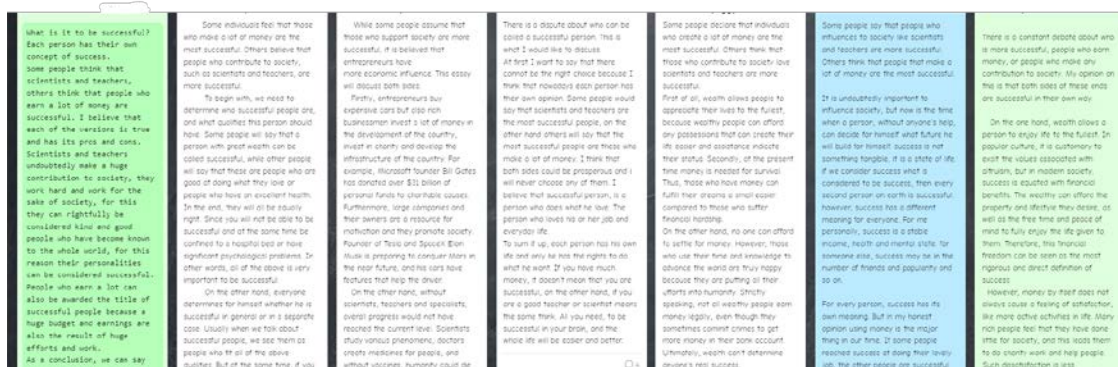


Figure 2 – Samples of participants’ discussions on Padlet

Data was collected using quantitative measures to assess the impact of the Padlet intervention on soft skills development. Quantitative data was collected through pre/post-observations, consisting of validated instrument such as performance evaluations. Performance evaluations assessed participants' actual demonstration of soft skills through observable behaviors and outcomes.

All aspects of 4C skills were observed and analyzed by four teachers. The final report was given in graph and diagrams. The results of the observations are presented in the form of the following analysis results (Figure 3).

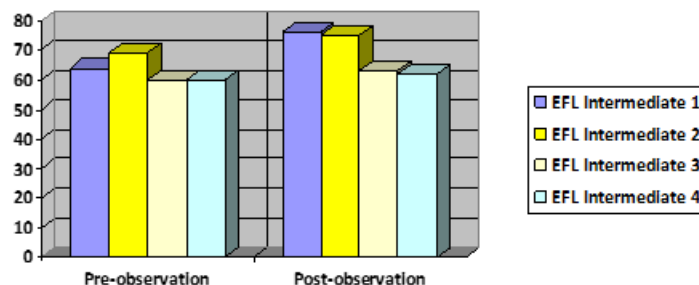


Figure 3 - Percentage of participants’ 4C skills

Based on Figure 3, it is known that 4C skills of experimental groups’ students is more dominant than control groups’ students. This can be seen from the percentage

obtained by participants. The highest result is taken by EFL Intermediate 1 group students, and the lowest is by EFL Intermediate 1 group students. Based on the results of the analysis, the communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity skills of students have a very good achievement.

The hypothesis that incorporating the Padlet application into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education at International Information Technology University will result in notable advancements in the development of soft skills was proved while doing the following experiment. Students who actively participated in Padlet activities improved communication skills, as evidenced by increased engagement in discussions and enhanced clarity in their expressions. In addition, there was improvements in collaboration skills, which included involvement in group tasks and teamwork. Also, there was progress in critical thinking abilities, which were demonstrated through the analysis and synthesis of information gathered from Padlet activities. The results show that the usage of Padlet fosters creativity among EFL learners, as demonstrated by the generation of innovative ideas and solutions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has yielded valuable insights into the potential of Padlet as a tool to enhance the development of soft skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. By implementing Padlet-based activities that focus on communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, this study has demonstrated positive results in the development of soft skills among students at International Information Technology University. The findings indicate that Padlet provides a versatile and effective platform for facilitating interactive and engaging learning experiences, promoting student engagement, and fostering comprehensive skill development in the EFL classroom. Through the creation of collaborative spaces for brainstorming, discussion, and reflection, Padlet enables students to actively participate in their learning process and interact with course content in meaningful ways. The integration of technology in EFL education shows promise in enhancing teaching and learning experiences, equipping students for success in a globalized world.

Limitation. Despite the significant findings of this research, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size and composition of participants may influence the results, and future research could benefit from larger and more diverse participant groups. Additionally, the duration of the intervention and the specific Padlet activities implemented may have varied effects on soft skills development, and further investigation into optimal intervention strategies is warranted. Furthermore, the reliance on performance evaluations may introduce bias and subjectivity into the data collection process, and future research could explore alternative assessment methods to provide more objective measures of soft skills development.

Recommendations. Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be made for future practice and research in the field of EFL education:

1. Educators should continue to explore innovative ways to integrate technology, such as Padlet, into EFL classrooms to enhance student engagement and promote soft skills development.

2. Further research is needed to investigate the long-term effects of Padlet interventions on soft skills development and academic achievement in EFL education.

3. Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different Padlet activities and instructional strategies for targeting specific soft skills areas.

4. Collaboration among educators, researchers, and technology developers is essential for identifying best practices and advancing the integration of technology in EFL education.

5. Professional development opportunities should be provided for educators to enhance their digital literacy skills and effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices.

6. Policymakers should support initiatives aimed at promoting technology-enhanced learning environments in EFL education and provide resources and infrastructure to facilitate technology integration in schools and universities.

Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of technology in enhancing soft skills development in EFL education and highlights the potential of Padlet as a valuable tool for promoting student learning and engagement. By addressing the identified limitations and implementing the recommended strategies, educators and stakeholders can continue to enhance the quality and effectiveness of EFL education in the digital age.

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АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІН ОҚЫТУ ҮДЕРІСІНДЕ SOFT SKILLS ДАҒДЫЛАРЫН ЖЕТІЛДІРУ: СТУДЕНТТЕР АРАСЫНДА PADLET ҚОСЫМШАСЫН ҚОЛДАНА ОТЫРЫП ЗЕРТТЕУ

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Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада Халықаралық ақпараттық технологиялар университетінің студенттеріне ағылшын тілін оқытуда soft skills-ті жақсарту үшін Padlet қосымшасын қолданудың тиімділігін зерттеу жұмысы қарастырылады. Коммуникация, ынтымақтастық, сыни ойлау және шығармашылық сияқты икемді дағдылар (soft skills) еңбек ресурстарының жаһандануы жағдайында бағдарланған студенттер үшін маңызды құзыреттер болып табылады. Технологияны білімге біріктіру барған сайын маңызды бола түсуде және Padlet платформасы бірлескен оқыту мен мазмұнды бөлісуге арналған түрлі мүмкіндіктерді ұсынуда. Бұл зерттеу студенттердің икемді дағдыларын (soft skills) дамытуға Padlet платформасын қолданудың әсерін бағалау үшін бақылауға дейінгі/кейінгі деректерді талдау арқылы алынған сандық әдісті қолданады. Қатысушылар кездейсоқ түрде зерттеудің негізгі нысаны ретінде әрекет ететін эксперименттік топқа немесе дәстүрлі оқытуды алатын бақылау тобына бөлінеді. Бақылауға дейінгі және кейінгі икемді дағдыларды өлшеу үшін дәлелденген құралдар, соның ішінде тиімділікті бағалау қолданылады. Деректерді сандық талдау әдістері топтар арасындағы орташа көрсеткіштерді салыстыру үшін және Padlet-тің икемді дағдыларды дамытудағы тиімділігін бағалау үшін қолданылады. Күтілетін нәтижелерге коммуникацияның анықтығын жақсарту, топтық тапсырмаларды орындау кезінде ынтымақтастықты кеңейту, ақпарат синтезі арқылы сыни ойлауды күшейту кіреді. Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері дағдыларды дамытудың инновациялық тәсілдерін іздейтін оқытушылар үшін және технологияны шетел тілін үйрету барысында тиімді біріктіруге ұмтылатын мекемелер үшін маңызды. Халықаралық ақпараттық технологиялар университетінде оқытудың белгілі бір контекстінде Padlet-тің икемді дағдыларды дамытудағы рөлін зерттей отырып, бұл зерттеу технологияны қолдану арқылы оқытуды және оның студенттердің оқу нәтижелеріне әсерін тереңірек түсінуге ықпал етеді.

Тірек сөздер: оқыту, үйрену, ағылшын тілі, технология, Padlet, студенттер, дамыту, дағдылар

СОВЕРШЕНСТВОВАНИЕ SOFT SKILLS В ПРОЦЕССЕ ОБУЧЕНИЯ АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ: ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ С ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕМ ПРИЛОЖЕНИЯ PADLET СРЕДИ СТУДЕНТОВ

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Аннотация. Целью данного исследования является изучение эффективности использования приложения Padlet для улучшения soft skills в обучении английскому языку среди студентов Международного университета информационных технологий. Надпрофессиональные навыки (soft skills), такие как коммуникация, коллаборация, критическое мышление и креативность, являются важнейшими компетенциями для студентов, ориентирующихся в условиях глобализации трудовых ресурсов. Интеграция технологий в образование становится все более важной, и Padlet предоставляет универсальную платформу для совместного обучения и обмена контентом. В этом исследовании используется количественный метод, использующий анализ данных до/после наблюдения для оценки влияния использования Padlet на развитие soft skills у студентов. Участники случайным образом распределяются либо в экспериментальную группу, которая выступает в качестве основного объекта исследования, либо в контрольную группу, получающую традиционное обучение. Проверенные инструменты, включая оценку эффективности, используются для измерения надпрофессиональных навыков до и после вмешательства. Методы количественного анализа данных используются для сравнения средних показателей между группами и оценки эффективности Padlet в развитии надпрофессиональных навыков. Ожидаемые результаты включают улучшение четкости общения, расширение коллаборации при выполнении групповых задач, усиление критического мышления посредством синтеза информации. Результаты этого исследования имеют значение для преподавателей, ищущих инновационные подходы к развитию навыков, и для учреждений, стремящихся эффективно интегрировать технологии в языковое образование. Исследуя роль Padlet в развитии надпрофессиональных навыков в конкретном контексте обучения в Международном университете информационных технологий, это исследование способствует более глубокому пониманию обучения с использованием технологий и его влияния на результаты обучения студентов.

Ключевые слова: обучение, изучение, английский язык, технология, Padlet, студенты, развитие, навыки

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