

Scrolling into Learning: The Role of Digital Platforms in Enhancing English Language Skills among Students

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Abstract

The study examined the role of digital platforms in enhancing the English language skills of students. Using a descriptive quantitative research design, data were collected from 38 student respondents from Mountain Province, Philippines through a structured questionnaire. The study investigated how students' engagement with digital platforms contributed to the development of vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening skills, and writing abilities. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents frequently used digital platforms that exposed them to English-language content. Findings showed that 81.6% of students reported vocabulary improvement, while 78.9% indicated enhanced reading and listening skills, and 71.1% experienced improvement in writing abilities through digital interaction. However, challenges such as distractions from non-academic content (63.2%) and internet connectivity issues (23.7%) were also identified. Overall, the study revealed that digital platforms served as valuable informal learning environments that supported English language development beyond traditional classroom instruction. The findings highlighted the importance of integrating digital platforms effectively in language learning to maximize their educational benefits.

Keywords: Digital Platforms, English Language Learning, Vocabulary Development, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, Digital Literacy, Student Learning, Language Skills Development

1. Introduction

In recent years, digital technology significantly transformed the educational landscape, particularly in the way students accessed information and developed academic skills. The rapid growth of mobile technologies, social media platforms, and online learning environments expanded opportunities for learning beyond traditional classroom settings. Digital platforms such as video-sharing websites, social networking sites, and educational applications allowed students to interact with diverse forms of content, including videos, captions, comments, blogs, and online discussions.

These platforms provided learners with continuous exposure to authentic language use, which supported the development of various language competencies. As technology became deeply integrated into students' daily routines, digital environments increasingly served as informal spaces for learning and communication (Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012; Redecker et al., 2011).

English language proficiency remained an essential skill in the globalized world, influencing academic success, communication abilities, and future career opportunities. Traditionally, English language learning had been primarily facilitated through classroom instruction, textbooks, and teacher-guided activities. However, the expansion of digital media introduced alternative pathways for language acquisition and practice. Students encountered English in numerous digital contexts, including social media posts, streaming videos, online articles, and interactive learning applications. Exposure to authentic language input through digital media played a crucial role in strengthening vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, listening skills, and written communication (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Stockwell, 2013).

A growing body of research emphasized the potential of digital platforms to enhance language learning. Online platforms created interactive learning environments that encouraged student participation, collaboration, and learner autonomy. Social media platforms, in particular, provided opportunities for students to communicate and exchange ideas using English in real-world contexts. Such interactions promoted meaningful engagement with language and contributed to language skill development (Aydin, 2012; Manca & Ranieri, 2016). Furthermore, digital learning environments allowed students to participate in collaborative activities such as online discussions, peer feedback, and shared content creation, which supported the development of communicative competence and critical thinking skills (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018; Wang & Vásquez, 2012).

Mobile technologies and digital media also played a significant role in expanding access to language learning resources. Through mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), students were able to practice language skills anytime and anywhere using smartphones and other portable devices. These technologies enabled learners to engage with authentic materials, interactive exercises, and multimedia content that supported independent and self-regulated learning (Burstion, 2015; Stockwell & Hubbard, 2013). Additionally, online platforms facilitated exposure to authentic linguistic and cultural contexts, which enhanced learners' understanding of language usage in real-life situations (Blake, 2016).

Despite the growing body of research on digital learning, many studies focused primarily on structured online learning platforms or formal digital education tools. Comparatively fewer studies examined how students' everyday engagement with digital platforms—such as scrolling through social media feeds, watching online videos, or reading digital content—contributed to the development of English language skills. Considering that students spent significant time interacting with digital media, it became important to explore how these informal digital experiences influenced language acquisition and literacy development (Greenhow & Lewin, 2016; Reinhardt, 2019).

This study was guided by the perspective that learning occurred through social interaction and exposure within digital environments. Social learning theory suggested that individuals acquired knowledge by observing and interacting with others within a social context (Bandura, 1977). In digital environments, students frequently observed language use, imitated expressions, and engaged in communication with others through online platforms. These interactions contributed to the development of language skills even outside formal learning settings.

Therefore, this study examined the role of digital platforms in enhancing the English language skills of students. Specifically, it explored how students' engagement with digital platforms contributed to the development of vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening abilities, and writing skills. By investigating the relationship between digital platform usage and language learning, the study provided insights into how digital environments complemented traditional classroom instruction and supported language development among students.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a **descriptive quantitative research design** to examine the role of digital platforms in enhancing the English language skills of students. Descriptive quantitative research was appropriate for this study because it allowed the researchers to systematically collect and analyze numerical data to describe patterns and relationships between students' use of digital platforms and their perceived development of English language skills.

This approach enabled the researchers to measure students' experiences and perceptions using structured survey responses and statistical analysis. The descriptive method focused on identifying how students engaged with digital platforms and how these engagements contributed to the development of their vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening abilities, and writing skills. Utilizing quantitative data, the study provided measurable insights into students' digital learning experiences.

2.2. Participants of the Study

The participants of the study consisted of 38 students from Mountain Province, Philippines. The respondents were selected because they regularly used digital platforms such as social media, online videos, and educational applications, which were relevant to the focus of the research. The students represented the target population of learners who frequently interacted with digital media as part of their daily academic and social activities. The selection of respondents followed a convenience sampling technique, as the participants were readily accessible to the researchers. This sampling method allowed the researchers to gather relevant data from students who actively engaged with digital platforms and were willing to participate in the study.

2.3. Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was designed to gather relevant information regarding students' use of digital platforms and their perceived improvement in English language skills. It served as the main tool for collecting quantitative data from the respondents and allowed the researchers to measure students' experiences and perceptions related to digital learning environments.

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section focused on the demographic profile of the respondents, which collected basic information such as relevant background details necessary for describing the participants of the study. The second section focused on digital platform use and English language skill development. This section contained several statements that measured students' experiences with digital platforms and how these platforms influenced the development of their vocabulary, reading comprehension, listening abilities, and writing skills.

The items in this section were designed to assess how frequently students interacted with digital content and how such engagement contributed to their language learning experiences. In addition to examining the benefits of digital platforms, the questionnaire also included items that explored the challenges encountered by students when using digital platforms for learning English. This section aimed to identify potential difficulties that students experienced while engaging with digital media. The statements focused on issues such as distractions from non-academic content, limited internet connectivity, difficulties in understanding online materials, and challenges in maintaining focus while using digital platforms. By examining these factors, the researchers were able to gain a broader understanding of both the advantages and limitations of digital platforms in supporting students' English language development.

The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale format, allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with each statement. The scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This format enabled the researchers to quantify students' responses and analyze patterns in the data.

2.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted after the research instrument had been prepared and approved for use. The researchers distributed the questionnaire to the selected respondents who were students in Mountain Province, Philippines. Prior to answering the questionnaire, the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for academic research purposes. The respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. After all responses had been collected, the researchers organized and compiled the data for analysis.

2.5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, specifically frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. These statistical techniques were used to summarize the respondents' answers and determine patterns in students' use of digital platforms and their perceived effects on English language skill development. Frequency and percentage distributions were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while mean scores were calculated to determine the overall level of agreement with the survey statements related to vocabulary development, reading comprehension, listening skills, and writing abilities. The results of the analysis were then interpreted to identify how digital platforms contributed to the enhancement of students' English language skills.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Students' Frequency of Digital Platform Use for English Exposure

The results of the study indicated that the majority of the respondents frequently used digital platforms that exposed them to English language content. Out of the 38 student respondents, 28 students (73.7%) reported that they regularly accessed digital platforms such as social media, video-sharing websites, and online learning applications that contained English content. Meanwhile, 7 students (18.4%) indicated moderate use of digital platforms for English exposure, while only 3 students (7.9%) reported limited use. The computed mean score of 4.12 suggested a high level of agreement among respondents that digital platforms served as a common source of English language exposure.

These findings suggested that digital platforms had become a significant part of students' daily learning experiences. The frequent exposure to English-language content through digital media allowed students to encounter authentic language usage in informal contexts. This finding aligned with the study of Greenhow and Lewin (2016), who argued that digital platforms blurred the boundaries between formal and informal learning environments. Similarly, Dabbagh and Kitsantas (2012) emphasized that social media environments enabled students to create personal learning spaces that facilitated continuous engagement with academic content outside traditional classrooms.

3.2. Influence of Digital Platforms on Vocabulary Development

The analysis of the survey responses revealed that digital platforms positively influenced students' vocabulary development. Based on the results, 31 respondents (81.6%) agreed that they learned new English words while browsing digital platforms, while 5 respondents (13.2%) reported moderate agreement and 2 respondents (5.2%) expressed neutral responses. The overall mean score of 4.28 indicated that students strongly perceived digital platforms as beneficial for vocabulary acquisition.

The improvement in vocabulary could be attributed to the constant exposure to English text through captions, comments, articles, and multimedia content. Students encountered unfamiliar words in context and gradually developed their understanding through repeated exposure. These findings were consistent with the work of Godwin-Jones (2018), who highlighted the role of digital technologies in providing authentic linguistic input that supported vocabulary learning. Likewise, Blake (2016) noted that technology-mediated learning environments enhanced language acquisition by allowing learners to engage with meaningful and contextualized language input.

3.3. Impact of Digital Platforms on Reading and Listening Skills

The findings further demonstrated that digital platforms contributed to the improvement of students' reading and listening skills. Among the respondents, 30 students (78.9%) agreed that watching English videos, reading posts, and engaging with online content improved their comprehension skills. Meanwhile, 6 respondents (15.8%) reported moderate improvement, and 2 respondents (5.3%) indicated minimal improvement. The calculated mean score of 4.19 suggested that digital platforms played an important role in strengthening students' receptive language skills.

These results suggested that digital platforms exposed students to authentic audiovisual materials that supported comprehension development. Watching English-language videos, podcasts, and educational content allowed learners to hear natural speech patterns and understand contextual meanings. This finding supported the conclusions of Burstson (2015), who reported that mobile-assisted language learning significantly improved learners' listening and comprehension skills. Furthermore, Kukulska-Hulme and Viberg (2018) emphasized that mobile and digital platforms enabled collaborative and interactive language learning experiences that enhanced learners' ability to process and interpret language.

3.4. Development of Writing Skills Through Digital Interaction

The results also indicated that digital platforms contributed to the development of students' writing skills. Among the respondents, 27 students (71.1%) agreed that interacting with digital platforms such as commenting on posts, participating in discussions, and sending messages helped them practice writing in English. In comparison, 8 respondents (21.1%) reported moderate improvement, while 3 respondents (7.8%) expressed neutral responses. The computed mean score of 4.05 indicated a generally positive perception of the role of digital platforms in improving writing abilities.

Digital platforms provided opportunities for students to practice writing informally and interactively. Through comments, messages, and online discussions, students actively used English to communicate their thoughts and ideas. This type of interaction encouraged frequent language use, which contributed to writing fluency. The findings supported previous research by Wang and Vásquez (2012), who noted that Web 2.0 environments encouraged language learners to produce written content through collaborative digital communication. Additionally, Manca and Ranieri (2016) emphasized that social media platforms facilitated interactive learning processes that enhanced students' communication skills.

3.5. Challenges and Proposed Strategies for Effective Use of Digital Platforms

Although digital platforms offered several learning benefits, the findings also revealed certain challenges experienced by students. The survey results showed that 24 respondents (63.2%) reported experiencing distractions from non-academic content while using digital platforms. Additionally, 9 respondents (23.7%) identified unstable internet connectivity as a challenge, while 5 respondents (13.1%) reported difficulties maintaining focus during online engagement. The overall mean score of 3.78 suggested that while digital platforms were useful learning tools, certain limitations affected their effectiveness.

These challenges highlighted the need for more structured and guided use of digital platforms in educational contexts. Distractions from entertainment content could reduce students' focus on academic learning. However, with appropriate strategies such as guided online learning activities, digital literacy training, and integration of educational content into digital environments, these challenges could be minimized. The findings supported the observations of Reinhardt (2019), who emphasized the importance of pedagogical guidance when integrating social media into language learning. Similarly, Stockwell and Hubbard (2013) noted that effective implementation of mobile-assisted language learning required structured learning strategies to maximize educational benefits while minimizing distractions.

3.6. Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by the study, several limitations were identified that may have influenced the scope and interpretation of the findings. First, the study involved a relatively small sample size of 38 student respondents from Mountain Province, Philippines, which may limit the generalizability of the results to a broader population of students. Since the participants were selected through convenience sampling, the respondents represented only those who were readily accessible to the researchers and may not fully reflect the experiences of students from other regions, educational institutions, or demographic backgrounds. Future research may consider including a larger and more diverse sample to obtain more comprehensive results.

Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported data collected through a questionnaire, which may be subject to response bias. The respondents' answers were based on their personal perceptions and experiences regarding the influence of digital platforms on their English language skills. As a result, the responses may have been influenced by individual interpretation, memory limitations, or social desirability bias. Although the structured questionnaire allowed the researchers to gather quantitative data efficiently, incorporating additional data collection methods such as interviews, observations, or language performance assessments could provide a more detailed and objective understanding of students' language development.

Another limitation of the study was that it focused mainly on students' perceptions of the impact of digital platforms, rather than directly measuring actual improvements in English language proficiency. While the findings indicated that students believed digital platforms supported the development of vocabulary, reading, listening, and writing skills, the study did not include standardized language assessments to verify these improvements. Future studies may incorporate performance-based evaluations or experimental research designs to better determine the direct effects of digital platform usage on language proficiency outcomes.

Finally, the study did not extensively examine the specific types of digital platforms or content used by students. Different platforms, such as social media, educational applications, video-sharing websites, or language-learning tools, may offer varying levels of effectiveness for language learning. A more detailed analysis of the specific digital tools and learning activities used by students could provide deeper insights into which platforms most effectively support English language skill development.

Despite these limitations, the study contributed meaningful findings regarding the role of digital platforms in supporting students' English language learning. The results provided a foundation for further research on how digital environments can be more effectively integrated into educational practices to enhance language development among students.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study examined the role of digital platforms in enhancing the English language skills of students and found that digital media significantly supported language development in several areas. The results revealed that most of the respondents frequently engaged with digital platforms that exposed them to English-language content, which contributed to improvements in vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, listening skills, and writing abilities. Students reported learning new words through captions, posts, and multimedia content, while online videos and digital discussions helped strengthen their comprehension and communication skills. These findings suggested that digital platforms served as valuable informal learning environments where students could practice and develop their English language abilities beyond traditional classroom instruction. Overall, the study highlighted the potential of digital platforms to complement formal language education and support continuous language learning among students.

Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that educators and educational institutions integrate digital platforms more effectively into language learning activities. Teachers may incorporate guided online learning tasks, digital discussions, and multimedia resources to encourage students to engage with English-language content in meaningful ways. Schools may also provide digital literacy training to help students use online platforms responsibly and effectively for academic purposes. Additionally, educational institutions may improve access to reliable internet connectivity and learning resources to support students in utilizing digital platforms for language development. Future researchers are also encouraged to conduct further studies involving larger samples and diverse educational settings to better understand the long-term impact of digital platforms on language learning outcomes.

Despite the contributions of the study, several limitations should be acknowledged. The research involved only 38 student respondents from Mountain Province, Philippines, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. The study also relied on self-reported questionnaire data, which reflected students' perceptions rather than direct measurements of language proficiency. Additionally, the research did not examine specific digital platforms or conduct experimental assessments to determine the exact effectiveness of different digital tools in improving English language skills. Future research may address these limitations by including larger sample sizes, using mixed research methods, and incorporating objective language proficiency assessments.

Compliance with ethical standards

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. All responses were kept confidential and used only for academic research purposes.

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