

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study examines students' perceptions of the use of digital media in English language learning at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students enrolled in English language courses. The findings indicate that students perceive digital media as an effective and flexible tool that enhances their language acquisition. Platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp were particularly valued for their ability to provide authentic English exposure, interactive learning experiences, and opportunities for autonomous learning. However, despite the benefits, students also identified several challenges, including limited internet access, digital literacy gaps, and distractions from non-educational content. The study suggests that a blended learning approach, combining digital media with structured classroom instruction, could help mitigate these challenges and maximize the benefits of technology in English language learning. Additionally, institutions should focus on enhancing digital literacy training and improving internet accessibility to support students in effectively utilizing digital tools. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on technology-enhanced language learning, particularly within the context of Islamic teacher training institutions, and provides insights for future studies on optimizing digital media use in English education.

Keywords: Students' Perceptions, Digital Media, English Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed the educational landscape, including English language learning. Digital media, such as online learning platforms, multimedia resources, and mobile applications, have become essential tools in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, enabling students to engage in interactive, flexible, and self-paced learning (Mofareh, 2019). The integration of digital media in language learning is not merely a trend but a necessity in modern education, as it provides access to authentic materials, enhances motivation, and fosters learner autonomy (Darwin & Burhan, 2021).

At the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani, digital media is increasingly utilized to support English language instruction. The institution recognizes the potential of digital tools in improving students' proficiency in English, particularly in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Various platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp groups have been incorporated into teaching and learning practices. These tools allow students to access diverse learning resources, communicate with peers and instructors, and practice language skills beyond the traditional classroom setting (Zainuddin, 2023).

Despite the advantages of digital media, its effectiveness in language learning largely depends on students' perceptions and attitudes toward its use. While some students view digital tools as engaging and beneficial, others may face challenges such as limited technological access, distractions, or difficulties in self-regulated learning (Harefa & Sihombing, 2022). Understanding students' perceptions is crucial for educators to optimize the integration of digital media in English language instruction and address potential obstacles that may hinder learning outcomes.

Recent research on digital media in English language learning has highlighted its potential to enhance engagement, motivation, and language acquisition. Studies have demonstrated that digital tools provide personalized and interactive learning experiences, fostering self-directed learning and improving linguistic competence (Pratiwi & Waluyo, 2023; Zainuddin, 2023). However, existing research often overlooks challenges such as digital literacy disparities, accessibility issues, and the impact of excessive screen time on learning outcomes (Dia, 2024). Addressing these gaps is essential to developing more inclusive and effective digital learning strategies in EFL education.

While contemporary research emphasizes the advantages of digital media in enhancing English language learning, there remains a gap in understanding how students in teacher training institutions, particularly in religious-based colleges like Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani, perceive and utilize these technologies. Most existing studies focus on general higher education institutions or secondary schools, overlooking the specific needs and challenges faced by future educators in integrating digital media into their pedagogical practices (Uggla & Soneryd, 2023; Zainuddin, 2023). Additionally, while studies highlight improvements in engagement and motivation, they do not sufficiently address how students navigate issues of digital accessibility, self-regulation, and the pedagogical effectiveness of these tools in an Islamic educational context (Hsu, 2021).

Furthermore, theoretical discussions on digital learning in EFL classrooms predominantly apply models of autonomous learning and technology acceptance, yet little research explores the intersection between digital media use and traditional pedagogical approaches within Islamic teacher training institutions. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining students' perceptions within this unique academic setting, considering both technological and cultural dimensions. By doing so, it aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how digital media can be effectively adapted to diverse educational environments.

This study aims to explore students' perceptions of the use of digital media in English language learning at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani. Specifically, it seeks to identify students' attitudes toward digital learning tools, their preferred types of digital media, and the challenges they encounter in using these resources. By analyzing their experiences, this research will provide insights for

educators to enhance digital learning strategies and improve the effectiveness of English language instruction. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discussion on digital literacy, learner engagement, and technology-enhanced education in EFL contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore students' perceptions of digital media in English language learning. A qualitative method is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of students' experiences, attitudes, and challenges in using digital tools (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study is designed as a case study, focusing on students enrolled in English language courses at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani, providing rich contextual insights into their digital learning experiences. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in terms of language proficiency levels, digital literacy, and exposure to digital media in learning. A total of 20 students participated in the study, representing different academic years and English language learning backgrounds. This sample size aligns with recommendations for qualitative research, ensuring data saturation and meaningful thematic analysis (Patton, 2015).

To gather comprehensive insights, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured Interviews: Individual interviews were conducted with 20 students to explore their personal experiences, attitudes, and challenges related to digital media use in English learning. This approach allowed flexibility in questioning while ensuring consistency in key themes (Zhong & Ouyang, 2010). The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: 1. Familiarization with the Data; Listening to audio recordings, transcribing interviews, and reviewing notes. 2. Generating Initial Code: Identifying key patterns and assigning initial labels to relevant statements. 3. Searching for Themes: Grouping similar codes to develop broader thematic categories. 4. Reviewing Themes: Refining the themes to ensure they accurately represent students' perceptions. 5. Defining and Naming Themes; Developing a clear narrative around the key findings. 6. Writing the Report; Integrating themes into a structured discussion with supporting quotes from participants.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The analysis of student responses provides valuable insights into their perceptions of digital media in English language learning at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani. Overall, the findings indicate that students recognize digital media as a useful and accessible tool that enhances their learning experience by offering flexibility, interactive content, and exposure to authentic English materials. However, while most students reported positive experiences, some also identified challenges,

including internet accessibility issues, digital literacy gaps, and distractions from non-academic content. This section presents a detailed examination of these findings, categorized into key themes related to students' perceptions, preferred digital platforms, challenges encountered, and the impact of digital media on language skills development.

1. Students' Perceptions of Digital Media in English Language Learning

The findings reveal that students generally perceive digital media as beneficial for their English language learning. Participants reported that digital tools, such as YouTube, Duolingo, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp, provided them with flexibility, accessibility, and interactive learning experiences. Many students highlighted that these platforms enabled them to practice English at their own pace, review materials multiple times, and engage with authentic language content (Zainuddin, 2023).

However, while most students acknowledged the advantages, some expressed concerns about over-reliance on digital media, stating that excessive screen time led to decreased focus and motivation. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that while digital learning can enhance engagement, it may also lead to distractions and lower attention spans (Hsu, 2021).

2. Preferred Digital Media Platforms for Learning English

Students identified YouTube as the most useful digital platform for English learning. They appreciated its availability of authentic materials, such as podcasts, interviews, and educational videos, which helped improve their listening and pronunciation skills (Darwin & Burhan, 2021). Google Classroom or Zoom, and WhatsApp were also frequently mentioned as effective tools for sharing materials, submitting assignments, and engaging in discussions.

Additionally, mobile applications like Duolingo and Grammarly were praised for their ability to provide structured grammar and vocabulary exercises. However, some students found them too rigid and repetitive, suggesting that their effectiveness depended on individual learning preferences (Mofareh, 2019).

3. Challenges in Using Digital Media for English Learning

While students acknowledged the benefits of digital media, they also encountered several challenges:

- a. **Limited Internet Access:** A significant number of students reported difficulties in accessing stable internet connections, especially those in rural areas, which hindered their ability to participate in online learning (Yeh & Tsai, 2022).
- b. **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Some students struggled with using certain digital platforms efficiently, particularly those who were less familiar with technology-based learning (Hsu, 2021).
- c. **Distractions and Time Management Issues:** Many students admitted that while digital media offered convenience, it also led to procrastination and distractions from non-educational content, such as social media and entertainment apps (Zainuddin, 2023).

4. The Role of Digital Media in Enhancing Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing Skills

Students highlighted different ways in which digital media helped improve their language skills:

- a. Speaking and Listening: Many students mentioned that watching English videos, listening to podcasts, and engaging in online discussions enhanced their pronunciation and listening comprehension (Darwin & Burhan, 2021).
- b. Reading and Writing: Online articles, e-books, and digital grammar tools such as Grammarly assisted students in improving their reading fluency and writing accuracy (Hsu, 2021).

However, students noted that digital tools alone were not sufficient; teacher guidance and structured classroom activities were still essential for reinforcing their learning (Yeh & Tsai, 2022).

5. Pedagogical Implications and Recommendations

Based on students' perceptions and challenges, the study suggests several recommendations for optimizing the integration of digital media in English language learning:

- a. Improving Digital Literacy Training – Teachers should provide workshops on how to effectively use educational platforms, ensuring that students maximize their learning potential (Hsu, 2021).
- b. Blended Learning Approach – Combining digital learning with face-to-face instruction can help maintain a balance between technology use and direct teacher support (Darwin & Burhan, 2021).
- c. Minimizing Distractions – Educators can guide students on time management strategies to reduce distractions and maintain focus during digital learning sessions (Zainuddin, 2023).
- d. Enhancing Internet Accessibility – Institutions should consider providing internet subsidies or on-campus digital resources to support students with connectivity issues (Yeh & Tsai, 2022).

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the significant role digital media plays in English language learning among students at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani. While students generally perceived digital tools as beneficial, their effectiveness depended on factors such as accessibility, digital literacy, and self-regulation. This section discusses the implications of the findings with previous research and pedagogical considerations.

1. The Positive Impact of Digital Media on Language Learning

The results confirm that digital media enhances student engagement, motivation, and language proficiency. Many students reported that platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, and Google Classroom provided them with diverse learning materials,

exposure to authentic English, and interactive exercises that improved their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. These findings align with Darwin and Burhan (2021), who emphasized that digital media fosters autonomous learning by enabling students to access unlimited resources tailored to their needs.

Additionally, the study found that mobile applications and online discussion platforms helped students develop their communicative competence by encouraging them to practice speaking and listening in real-life contexts. This supports Pratiwi and Waluyo (2023), who argued that digital tools facilitate language immersion and create opportunities for students to engage with English beyond traditional classroom settings.

2. *Challenges and Limitations of Digital Media in Learning*

Despite its benefits, students also faced several challenges in using digital media for learning. Limited internet access was a major barrier, particularly for students in remote areas, which restricted their ability to participate in online activities effectively. This finding is consistent with Yeh and Tsai (2022), who highlighted the digital divide in education and the need for improved internet accessibility and institutional support.

Another challenge was students' varying levels of digital literacy. While some students were proficient in using digital tools, others struggled with navigating educational platforms, which hindered their learning process. This echoes Hsu (2021), who found that a lack of digital skills could reduce the effectiveness of technology-based learning, emphasizing the importance of training programs to enhance digital competencies.

Furthermore, distractions and time management were recurring issues. Many students admitted that while digital media provided valuable learning opportunities, it also led to procrastination due to the presence of non-educational content such as social media and entertainment platforms. This aligns with Dia (2024), who warned that excessive screen time and unfocused learning behaviors could negatively impact academic performance.

3. *The Need for a Balanced Approach in Digital Learning*

The study highlights the need for a balanced approach to integrating digital media into English language learning. While digital tools offer numerous advantages, face-to-face instruction and teacher guidance remain essential for ensuring structured and meaningful learning experiences. This supports Elisa (2023), who advocate for a blended learning approach that combines digital media with traditional classroom interactions to maximize learning outcomes.

To address the identified challenges, institutions should consider:

- a. Providing digital literacy training to help students navigate educational platforms effectively.
- b. Implementing time management strategies to minimize distractions and enhance focus.

- c. Expanding internet accessibility through institutional support, such as on-campus Wi-Fi and data subsidies.
- d. Encouraging active learning strategies that integrate digital tools into lesson plans while maintaining pedagogical structure.

4. *Contributions and Future Research Directions*

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital media in EFL learning, particularly within the context of Islamic teacher training institutions. Unlike previous studies that focused on general university students, this research provides insights into how future educators perceive and engage with digital media, which has implications for teacher training programs.

Future research should explore:

- a. The long-term impact of digital media use on English language proficiency.
- b. The effectiveness of blended learning models in religious-based institutions.
- c. The role of teacher training programs in equipping future educators with digital teaching skills.

By addressing these areas, researchers can further enhance the understanding and implementation of digital learning in diverse educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of the use of digital media in English language learning at the Teacher Training and Education College of Insan Madani. The findings indicate that students generally view digital media as an effective and engaging tool that enhances their language learning experience. Platforms such as YouTube, Duolingo, Zoom, Google Classroom, and WhatsApp were particularly valued for their ability to provide flexible, interactive, and self-paced learning opportunities. Additionally, digital media was found to support the development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, offering exposure to authentic English materials and encouraging autonomous learning.

However, the study also highlighted several challenges that students face when using digital media, including limited internet access, digital literacy gaps, and distractions from non-educational content. These challenges indicate the need for institutional support, such as improving digital literacy training, ensuring stable internet access, and implementing blended learning models that combine digital tools with structured classroom instruction.

The findings contribute to the growing discourse on technology-enhanced language learning, particularly within Islamic teacher training institutions. Future research

should explore the long-term impact of digital learning on English proficiency, as well as effective strategies for integrating digital tools into teacher training programs. By addressing these aspects, educators and institutions can maximize the benefits of digital media while mitigating its challenges, ensuring that students gain meaningful and sustainable learning experiences.

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