The Influence of Digital Technology Utilization on Motivation and English Language Learning Ability: a Systematic Literature Review

Akmir[1], Ayla Putri[2], Syaefi Ramadhani[3], Suci Pratiwi[4], Agista Cahyani[5], Annisa[6]
[1,2,3,4,5,6] *Universitas Sains Islam Al-Mawaddah Warrahmah Kolaka, Indonesia*

ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has brought substantial changes to educational practices, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning. This study aims to examine the utilization of digital technology in English learning and analyze its influence on students' learning motivation and English language abilities. This research employed a qualitative field research approach. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with English teachers and seventh-grade students, and documentation of digital-based learning activities. The findings indicate that the integration of digital technology such as learning videos, interactive quizzes, and digital visual media positively influences students' motivation by increasing engagement, participation, and learning enjoyment. In addition, digital technology supports the development of students' English language abilities, particularly vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. However, several challenges were identified, including limited instructional time, differences in students' digital competencies, and teachers' readiness to integrate technology effectively. Therefore, the successful implementation of digital technology in EFL learning requires careful instructional planning, teacher professional development, and institutional support.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of digital technology has significantly influenced various aspects of human life, including the field of education. In recent years, educational practices have increasingly incorporated digital tools to support teaching and learning processes. This shift has transformed conventional learning models into more interactive, flexible, and student-centered approaches. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, the integration of digital technology plays an essential role in facilitating meaningful learning

experiences that align with the characteristics and needs of students in the digital era (Hwang & Fu, 2020).

Digital technology provides a wide range of learning resources that can enhance the quality of EFL instruction. The use of learning videos, mobile applications, digital flashcards, online quizzes, and interactive multimedia allows students to access authentic language input and engage actively in the learning process. These tools not only support independent learning but also provide immediate feedback, which is crucial for language acquisition.

Previous studies have shown that gamification-based platforms such as Quizizz and Kahoot can increase students' engagement and learning motivation through competitive elements and instant feedback (Azwar et al., 2024; Fitria, 2023). Similarly, digital flashcards have been proven effective in improving vocabulary mastery due to their visual support and repetitive practice features (Al Faruq et al., 2025; Wulandari & Fithriani, 2023). Moreover, digital reading media contribute to the development of students' literacy skills and reading comprehension by presenting texts in more engaging and accessible formats (Pratama & Mahendra, 2025).

In addition to improving language skills, digital technology also influences students' learning motivation. Digital learning environments can enhance intrinsic motivation by fostering learner autonomy, engagement, and a sense of competence (Chiu, 2021). However, the integration of digital technology in classroom settings is not without challenges. Teachers often face limitations related to digital literacy, instructional time, and classroom management, while students may experience distractions or unequal access to technological resources (Dewi et al., 2022; Safitri & Fithriani, 2024).

From an Islamic education perspective, students are viewed as holistic individuals whose intellectual, emotional, and spiritual potentials must be developed in a balanced manner. Digital technology can serve as a supportive learning medium as long as it is used wisely and directed toward character building and ethical learning practices (Ramayulis & Nizar, 2010; Suharto, 2011).

Preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka indicated that English learning was still predominantly conducted through conventional methods, such as teacher explanations and textbook-based activities. Although digital media had been introduced, their utilization was not yet optimal or consistently integrated into all stages of learning. Students tended to show low engagement during monotonous lessons, while their participation increased when digital tools were employed. Furthermore, students' vocabulary mastery and reading

comprehension levels varied, highlighting the need for more engaging instructional strategies.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to explore the utilization of digital technology in English learning and examine its influence on students' learning motivation and English language ability among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka.

In addition, the growing emphasis on 21st-century skills has further highlighted the importance of integrating digital technology into language learning. Skills such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity can be fostered through technology-enhanced learning activities that encourage students to actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information. In EFL contexts, digital tools provide opportunities for students to practice language skills in meaningful and interactive ways, thereby supporting both linguistic development and higher-order thinking skills.

Moreover, the integration of digital technology in English learning is closely related to students' learning habits and daily exposure to digital media. Many students are already familiar with smartphones, social media, and online content, which can be leveraged as learning resources when properly guided by teachers. By incorporating digital technology into classroom instruction, teachers can bridge the gap between students' everyday digital experiences and formal learning objectives, making English learning more relevant and contextual.

However, effective technology integration requires careful consideration of pedagogical principles. Technology should not be used merely as a substitute for traditional teaching tools but should be integrated in ways that enhance learning outcomes. Teachers need to select digital media that align with learning objectives, students' proficiency levels, and classroom conditions. Without proper planning and guidance, the use of digital technology may not yield optimal learning benefits.

Therefore, examining how digital technology is utilized in real classroom settings and understanding its influence on students' motivation and English language abilities is essential. Such examination provides valuable insights for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing effective and sustainable digital-based English learning practices.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of digital technology in EFL learning is closely linked to the role of teachers as instructional designers and facilitators. Teachers are required not only to master technological tools but also to integrate them meaningfully into lesson planning, implementation, and evaluation. The selection of appropriate digital media, learning activities, and

assessment strategies determines whether technology use can genuinely enhance students' learning experiences. Without sufficient pedagogical consideration, technology may function merely as an add-on rather than as an integral part of the learning process.

In junior secondary school contexts, such as SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka, students are at a critical stage of language development. At this level, learners require learning environments that support motivation, confidence, and gradual skill development. Digital technology can assist teachers in providing varied learning stimuli that accommodate students' diverse learning needs and proficiency levels. By presenting learning materials through multiple modalities, technology-based instruction can help students better understand abstract language concepts and maintain sustained engagement.

Additionally, previous studies emphasize that motivation plays a pivotal role in determining students' success in learning a foreign language. Students with higher motivation tend to participate more actively, invest greater effort, and demonstrate persistence when facing learning difficulties. Therefore, exploring the relationship between digital technology utilization and learning motivation is particularly relevant in EFL classrooms, where students often experience anxiety and low confidence. Understanding this relationship allows educators to design learning environments that support both affective and cognitive aspects of language learning.

The research questions are as follows:
1. How is digital technology utilized in English learning among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka?
2. What is the influence of digital technology utilization on students' learning motivation and English language ability?

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design
This study employed a qualitative field research design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the use of digital technology in English learning and its impact on students' motivation and language abilities. The qualitative approach was selected to explore real classroom practices and participants' experiences without relying on statistical measurement.

Research Site and Participants
The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. The participants consisted of 25 seventh-grade students and one English teacher. The selection of the research site was based on the consideration that the school had begun

implementing digital technology in English instruction, although its use was still limited.

Data Sources and Collection Techniques

Data were obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the English teacher and selected students, and documentation of learning activities. Secondary data included lesson plans, teaching materials, and relevant literature.

Data Analysis dan Validity

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis techniques, including data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, triangulation was applied by comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of Digital Technology in English Learning

The findings revealed that digital technology was utilized in several forms during English learning activities at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka. Teachers employed learning videos, interactive quizzes, and digital visual media to support lesson delivery. Although technology was not used in every meeting, its integration during certain activities significantly influenced classroom interaction.

Classroom observations showed that students were more attentive and actively involved when digital media were incorporated into the lessons. Learning videos helped students understand pronunciation and contextual language use, while interactive quizzes encouraged participation and provided immediate feedback. These results indicate that digital technology creates a more engaging learning environment compared to conventional teaching methods.

Influence on Students' Learning Motivation

The use of digital technology had a positive impact on students' learning motivation. Students demonstrated higher enthusiasm and confidence during technology-assisted activities. Interactive quizzes and visual media reduced learning boredom and motivated students to participate actively. These findings support Chiu's (2021) assertion that digital learning environments enhance motivation by increasing engagement and learner autonomy.

Interview data also revealed that students perceived English learning with digital tools as more enjoyable and less monotonous. The use of multimedia resources helped students feel more comfortable and interested in learning English, which is essential for sustaining motivation.

In addition, digital technology supported students' intrinsic motivation by allowing them to take a more active role in the learning process. When students interacted with quizzes and visual media, they were able to monitor their own learning progress through immediate feedback. This sense of control and achievement contributed to increased self-confidence and persistence in learning English. Such conditions are consistent with self-determination theory, which emphasizes autonomy and competence as key factors in motivating learners (Chiu, 2021).

Furthermore, the variation of digital learning activities helped maintain students' attention throughout the lesson. Compared to repetitive textbook-based instruction, the use of videos and interactive exercises created a dynamic learning atmosphere that encouraged students to remain engaged. This finding is in line with Fitria (2023), who found that gamification elements can significantly enhance students' motivation by making learning more interactive and enjoyable.

Influence on English Language Ability

Digital technology also contributed to the improvement of students' English language abilities, particularly in vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension. Visual support and repetitive exposure through digital flashcards and quizzes enabled students to remember new vocabulary more effectively. In addition, learning videos provided contextualized language input that supported students' comprehension, in line with findings by Al Faruq et al. (2025) and Pratama and Mahendra (2025).

The use of audiovisual media helped students associate words with images and situations, which facilitated deeper understanding and retention. This approach was particularly beneficial for beginner-level learners, as it reduced reliance on translation and encouraged contextual learning. As a result, students were better able to recognize and use vocabulary in simple sentences and reading tasks.

Regarding reading comprehension, digital texts and visual materials supported students in identifying main ideas and understanding contextual meaning. Students reported that images and videos helped them grasp the content of reading passages more easily. These findings indicate that digital technology can function as an effective scaffold for language comprehension, especially for students with lower proficiency levels.

However, the extent of improvement varied among students due to differences in digital literacy and learning pace. This indicates that technology integration should be accompanied by appropriate guidance and support from

teachers to ensure that all students benefit equally from digital learning activities.

Challenges in Technology Integration

Despite its benefits, several challenges were identified in the implementation of digital technology. Limited instructional time restricted the optimal use of digital media, and differences in students' technological skills affected learning outcomes. Teachers also emphasized the importance of classroom management to prevent distractions during technology use. These findings are consistent with previous studies highlighting the need for teacher readiness and pedagogical competence in digital learning environments (Dewi et al., 2022; Safitri & Fithriani, 2024).

Another challenge related to differences in students' digital competencies. While some students were able to operate digital tools independently, others required additional guidance and assistance. This gap affected the effectiveness of technology-based learning activities and occasionally slowed down the learning process. These findings indicate that students' digital readiness plays a crucial role in determining the success of digital learning implementation.

In addition, teachers highlighted classroom management as a significant concern when using digital devices. The potential for distraction increased when students accessed devices without close supervision. Therefore, teachers needed to establish clear rules and provide continuous monitoring to ensure that technology use remained focused on learning objectives. This finding reinforces previous research emphasizing the importance of pedagogical control and teacher preparedness in digital learning environments (Dewi et al., 2022; Safitri & Fithriani, 2024).

Furthermore, institutional support also influenced the effectiveness of digital technology utilization. Limited access to stable internet connections and insufficient technological infrastructure sometimes hindered the smooth implementation of digital-based learning activities. These constraints suggest that successful integration of digital technology requires not only teacher competence but also adequate institutional support and resource availability.

Pedagogical Implications of Digital Technology Utilization

The findings of this study indicate that the utilization of digital technology in EFL learning has important pedagogical implications for teaching practices at the junior secondary school level. The positive influence of digital media on students' motivation and English language abilities suggests that teachers should consider integrating technology as a regular component of instructional design rather than as an occasional supplement. When digital tools are

systematically embedded into lesson planning, learning objectives can be achieved more effectively.

One important pedagogical implication relates to the selection of appropriate digital media. Teachers need to choose technology that aligns with students' proficiency levels and learning objectives. For example, interactive quizzes and digital flashcards are suitable for supporting vocabulary development, while learning videos and digital reading materials are effective for improving comprehension skills. This strategic selection allows technology to function as a scaffold that supports gradual language development.

Another implication concerns the role of feedback in learning. Digital technology enables teachers to provide immediate feedback through quizzes and application-based exercises, which helps students recognize their learning progress and areas for improvement. Immediate feedback not only enhances language understanding but also strengthens students' motivation by reinforcing a sense of achievement. Therefore, feedback mechanisms should be intentionally incorporated into digital learning activities.

Furthermore, the integration of digital technology requires teachers to adopt more facilitative roles in the classroom. Rather than acting solely as information providers, teachers are expected to guide, monitor, and support students during technology-assisted learning activities. This shift encourages more active student participation and promotes learner autonomy, which is essential for sustained motivation and effective language learning.

From an institutional perspective, schools should support teachers by providing adequate infrastructure, access to digital resources, and professional development opportunities. Institutional support ensures that digital technology can be implemented consistently and sustainably. Without such support, the potential benefits of digital learning may not be fully realized.

Islamic Education Perspective

From an Islamic education perspective, digital technology should be used as a means to support holistic student development rather than as an end in itself. The integration of technology must align with ethical values and character education to ensure balanced intellectual and moral growth (Ramayulis & Nizar, 2010; Suharto, 2011).

In the context of EFL learning, digital media such as learning videos and interactive quizzes can be utilized not only to enhance language skills but also to cultivate values such as responsibility, honesty, and cooperation. For instance, collaborative digital activities encourage students to work together, respect others' opinions, and develop social awareness during the learning

process. This approach aligns with the Islamic view that education should shape learners' character alongside academic competence.

Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in guiding students to use digital technology wisely. Teacher supervision and instructional guidance are essential to prevent the misuse of digital devices and to ensure that learning activities remain focused on educational objectives. When integrated with proper guidance, digital technology can support meaningful learning experiences that strengthen both cognitive and moral development. Thus, the use of digital technology in EFL classrooms should be strategically planned and ethically oriented to achieve holistic educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the utilization of digital technology in English learning at SMP Negeri 2 Kolaka positively influences students' learning motivation and English language abilities. Digital media enhance student engagement, create interactive learning environments, and support the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension. However, the effectiveness of digital technology integration depends on teachers' readiness, time management, and students' digital competencies. Therefore, systematic instructional planning, continuous teacher development, and institutional support are essential to maximize the benefits of digital technology in EFL learning.

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