



# EFL Students' Attitudes toward Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) as a Mediation

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## Abstract

This research aimed to understand student attitudes towards the integration of digital learning in English language education at 1<sup>st</sup> State Senior High School, Peukan Pidie. Employing a qualitative under case study design combining offline questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to gain a comprehensive understanding of student perspectives. Sixty students participated, providing a rich dataset for analysis. The data from the questionnaires revealed prevalent trends in student attitudes. The interview data underwent thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings demonstrated a consistently positive attitude among students toward digital English learning. Participants perceived digital tools as engaging, accessible, and beneficial to their learning. They highlighted the enjoyable and interactive nature of these technologies, emphasizing their ease of use and perceived support in the learning process. This study underscores the potential benefits of strategically integrating digital tools into English language education, reflecting a positive student reception and highlighting the technology's perceived effectiveness in enhancing learning outcomes.

**Keywords:** *Digital Learning, Student Attitudes, English Language Learning, Technology Integration, Online Learning*

## INTRODUCTION

The media has such a big impact on society individually and in groups. Various studies have proven how powerful the influence of new media is in society especially affects the younger generation, in this case, the influences on students include changes in patterns and forms of good or bad communication between children and parents, among others teenagers in their circle of friends, as well as between students and lecturers.

The media is so fulfilling the mass communication process in essence in our daily lives without realizing it the process of conveying messages from the communicator of its presence and influence. to communicants. Mass communication theory media informs, entertains, "is

one of the communication processes fun, sometimes annoying takes place at the level of society at large. The media often degrades it whose identification is determined by distinctive characteristics we become commodities that can be sold institutional. The message is a product to the highest bidder. Media helps and commodities that have exchange value, define us, they shape more relationships between the sender and receiver of our reality (Baran, 2011:4).

One case is that an EFL student interacts with local English speakers on social media for recreational purposes or activities carried out in their spare time. Most IDLE-related things about taking the last-mentioned position and setting that Sit-out-of-gear is the same as the extramural Sit-out-of-gear activities (Lee & Dressman, 2018). The speed of technology development facility students in learning English digitally. They could express and use English in an informal digital environment through social media and by learning English applications or resources. Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) contributed to students' language enhancement. IDLE-based learning can be built through the initiative and willingness of each individual because this learning is not tied to a specific schedule or material to be studied. Each individual can organize and determine how they learn according to their wishes.

Based on preliminary research, Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) provides students with an increase in learning English digitally, being able to express and more freely use social media and applications for informal English learning resources or in the school environment. Students also agree that using digital media as a learning tool can improve their English. Based on the explanation, the researcher intended to explore "EFL Students' attitudes toward informal digital learning of English (IDLE) as a media". The researcher chose this topic because the researcher wanted to know about students' attitudes towards media digital learning. The researcher chose the title because this title has not been studied by other researchers and mostly only examines attitude and IDLE, not both. This study was aimed to reveal how students' attitudes towards informal digital learning of English.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Informal Digital Learning of English**

Casual learning was characterized as independent realizing, which is unstructured and naturalistic. It typically takes place outside of formal classes, and informal learning is typically ignored and undervalued. Benson Inactive is hence characterized as gaining English freely from formal specialists, e.g., instructors and lab aides (Lee and Drajati). As students learn by making their own decisions, IDLE may promote autonomous and independent learning. They pick up English without intending to learn it. Additionally, it boosts students' enthusiasm for and motivation to learn English (Lee & Lee, 2021; Temban, Hua, and Said).

### **Students' Attitude Towards Social Media**

There are many free and inexpensive applications available in app stores that provide potential opportunities to the academic world. The use of these applications helps to create a social-media-focused culture that influences how people communicate, teach, and learn (Mao, 2014). Reported that online social networks help initiate learning activities among students. Students who use online social networks can develop their knowledge based on extensive communications and knowledge sharing from social network sites. Investigated high school students' affordances for social media, their attitudes and beliefs about these new technologies, and related obstacles and issues in using social media. Findings indicated

that students show positive attitudes and beliefs about social media use in education. Specifically, students believed they could improve their learning when using social media and also enjoy using social media for an assignment or their own learning after school. However, some students thought that social media created a distraction and was time-consuming.

### **Platform to support Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE)**

Currently, students and teachers are using smartphones to enhance language learning through mobile devices, utilizing various platforms that are relevant to the material. According to Lee (2020) IDLE stands for "informal, self-directed English learning using a variety of digital devices (e.g., smartphones use, desktop computers) and resources (e.g., online apps, social media) outside of formal situations. Moreover, have shown in their study that IDLE is an umbrella term since educators are interested in how students learn English in informal settings using digital media. It's important to emphasize understanding the term "digital" to refer the digital devices (e.g., smartphone use, desktop computer) and related materials (e.g., tablets, e-readers, gaming consoles, cell phones, personal computers, laptops, etc). (e.g., mobile apps, web apps, computer software, social media, etc.).

### **Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) in EFL context**

As a field of study and practice, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is both exciting and frustrating. It is exciting due to its complexity, dynamic nature, and rapid change, and frustrating due to the same characteristics (Hubbard, 2009). Provides a succinct definition of computer-assisted language learning, which is defined as "the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning" proposes that "This expression is broadly used to allude to the area of innovation and second language educating and learning despite the way that amendments for the term are recommended consistently". According to the following description: Any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language is a definition of CALL that accommodates its changing nature.

### **An expanded understanding of IDLE**

Suggests reimagining IDLE as independent, self-directed learning of English in environments outside the classroom and online, where individuals are motivated by personal interests or guided by others, Benson (2011). The position of IDLE may vary but remains primarily connected to casual and online environments. In this sense, learning a language is not focused on obtaining a certification, but rather occurs naturally and informally. In terms of the locus of control, students participating in IDLE have the ability to take charge of their learning and independently navigate the digital world effectively and efficiently. It is worth mentioning that IDLE is influenced not just by one's personal interest, but also by the support from others (e.g. teacher and classmates Therefore, we believe that IDLE can occur either through self-starting or through initiation by others. With this revised conceptualization, we aim to exclude the portion specifically related to formal education settings in the extracurricular IDLE.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to investigate EFL students' attitudes toward Digital Learning of English (IDLE) as a mediating factor in their English language learning processes. A qualitative case study is particularly appropriate for examining complex phenomena within their real-life contexts, enabling a deep understanding of participants'

perspectives, behaviors, and experiences (Yin, 2018). To know student EFL students' attitudes toward informal digital Learning of English as mediation, the participants selected in this study were students of senior high school at 1<sup>st</sup> State Senior High School, Peukan Pidie. The participants were tenth-grade students in senior high school. To distribute questionnaires, the researcher selected two classes which are filled with 60 students. Where one class was filled with 30 students and then distributed the questionnaire sheets directly. The instruments of the research are the questionnaire and interview. This study uses closed-ended questionnaires. The Likert scale uses rating scales with 5 points. Those five points; Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Undecided (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The questionnaire used in the main study consists of the 20-item IDLE. The IDLE section includes two constructs: 1) Receptive (10 items); and 2) Productive (10 items).

In this study, interviews were conducted by selecting 10 students from tenth grade. in preparation for collecting data, the first after making the questionnaire, the researcher went to the Senior high school; at 1<sup>st</sup> State Senior High School, Peukan Pidie to ask the principal for research approval.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The result can be seen in the following table which shows the research instrument; the questionnaire result and the interviews.

### 1. What are students' attitudes on Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE)

#### a. questionnaire

The questionnaire used consisted of 20 statements, after going through a data reduction process, 10 statements were obtained relating to Receptive skills, namely ability and understanding when listening or reading and 10 of them were filled with productive skills, namely messages both verbally and in writing or the ability to communicate in a language with skills such as writing and speaking. The data comes from statement numbers which are receptive skills 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and productive skills 11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20.

No	Statements	Alternative Answer					Total
		SA	A	N	D	SD	
1	Learning through digital media makes me learn English quickly	24	25	10	1	0	60
		40%	41%	17%	1%	0%	100%
2	Digital media such as social media platforms can help me in learning English	15	35	10	3	0	60
		24%	55%	16%	5%	0%	100%
3	Digital informal learning provides significant support to my language development	13	33	12	2	0	60
		22%	55%	20%	3%	0%	100%
4	I like learning using digital media because it is fun	24	27	5	2	1	60
		41%	46%	8%	3%	2%	100%
5	Using digital media makes me more enthusiastic about learning English	18	31	7	3	1	60
		30%	51%	12%	5%	2%	100%
6	Learning English through digital applications is more interesting and easier to understand	17	31	10	1	1	60
		28%	51%	17%	2%	2%	100%
7	Informal language learning allows me to carry out learning activities based on my own interests	12	26	14	8	0	60
		20%	44%	23%	13%	0%	100%
8		13	30	13	4	0	60

	Informal digital learning allows me to develop my language skills anytime and anywhere	22%	50%	22%	6%	0%	100%
9	Informal digital learning gives me an alternative to practice language skills outside the classroom	16	25	12	6	1	60
		27%	41%	20%	10%	2%	100%
10	Informal digital learning helps me carry out independent and personalized English learning outside the classroom	20	26	12	2	0	60
		34%	43%	20%	3%	0%	100%
11	The flexibility of informal digital learning allows me to get maximum language input without the limitations of space and time	14	24	17	5	0	60
		23%	40%	28%	9%	0%	100%
12	Informal digital learning helps me expand my language learning experience at school and outside school	16	31	8	2	3	60
		27%	52%	13%	3%	5%	100%
13	.I write comments in English on social media such as Instagram and TikTok	14	18	22	5	1	60
		23%	30%	37%	8%	2%	100%
14	Informal digital learning improves my English learning independently without parents	19	26	9	4	1	60
		32%	44%	15%	7%	2%	100
15	I often read English news online to get new information and improve my reading skills outside of class	17	25	14	4	0	60
		28%	42%	23%	7%	0%	100
16	I often use online dictionaries to look up specific meanings of English words and improve my vocabulary mastery outside formal classes	19	28	10	2	1	60
		32%	46%	17%	3%	2%	100%
17	I have used technology to connect with native English speakers (e.g. American, British, Australian) and non-native speakers (Japanese, Chinese, Arabic) around the world	15	22	15	4	4	60
		25%	36%	25%	7%	7%	100%
18	I often use technology to share English content online through several applications	14	20	11	9	3	60
		25%	35%	19%	16%	5%	100%
19	I often use digital devices to carry out informal English learning activities in my free time outside of class	11	32	11	5	1	60
		18%	54%	18%	8%	2%	100%
20	I use social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram to chat with other people in English	16	21	18	4	1	60
		27%	35%	30%	7%	2%	100%

**Table 1**

Based on the questionnaire, the first statement "Learning through digital media makes me learn English quickly", (40%) of students strongly agree with this statement, while half (41%) agree with this statement, neutral (17%), only a few (2%) disagree and (0%) strongly disagree agree with that. Based on the results of the questionnaire, students felt that learning

using digital media was useful, showing that learning through digital media made them faster in the process of learning English.

The data, derived from the questionnaire, revealed a predominantly positive perception of digital media's role in English language learning. Specifically, a significant majority of students (81%) either strongly agreed or agreed that digital media facilitated faster English learning. This suggests that students perceive digital tools as effective aids in their language acquisition process. This aligns with contemporary research highlighting the potential of digital platforms to enhance language learning through increased accessibility and engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

#### b. Interview

Based on the analysis of the interview transcribed, the advantages of learning through media digital are that provides a lot of content, such as videos on TikTok and Instagram.

**Research:** *Do you like learning English using digital technology as a learning medium outside the classroom?*

*"I like it, because social media now has a lot of English content that makes other people learn too,,(Student 1)*

*"learning to use digital technology was very easy now I can learn just through content on TikTok and Instagram,,(Student 2)*

*"I like, I can know and remember some English words because I often watch people's video content on TikTok,,(Student 3)*

Media digital is easy to use, for students and makes it easier for them the teaching and learning proses.

*"I like it, because it's easy to find, just type it on You Tube,,(Student 1)*

*"Digital technology made it very easy for me to study at home with the help of my parents, so I really love it,,(Student 2)*

*"I like that it was very easy to reach via hanphone,,(Student 3)*

*"yes, because all media are easy to use,,(Student 4)*

Flexibel students can learn via media digital english anywhere and anytime they want.

*"Easy and safe for everyone to use,,(Student 1)*

*"I like it because I can study while lying down in my room,,(Student 2)*

*"I like it, I can study anywhere and anytime I like,,(Student 3)*

*"I really like it because it was safe and reliable,,(Student 1)*

Media digital can be relied on at all times for students.

*"I really like it because it was safe and reliable,,(Student 1)*

Media digital that can help in the learning process for students.

**Research:** *What platforms or media do you usually like and often use when learning English outside of class?*

*"Usually we use social media such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, games,,*

*"I use tiktok,,(Student 1)*

*"I use tiktok, instagram, youtube"(Student 2)*

*"I use the duolingo app,,(Student 3)*

*"I use the cake app,,(Student 4)*

*"I use tiktok to watch english content,,(Student 4)*

*"I prefer using YouTube because I can learn directly from native speakers,,(Student 5)*

*"I often use TikTok and YouTube as a tool to learn English,,(Student 6)*

Qualitative data, gathered through semi-structured interviews, corroborated these findings, revealing students' strong affinity for digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Participants consistently cited the abundance of English language content on these platforms as a key advantage, enabling them to learn English in an informal, engaging environment. For instance, students noted that they could 'know and remember some English words because I often watch people's video content on TikTok.' This reflects the growing trend of informal language learning through social media, where students actively engage with authentic language input (Mills, 2011).

Furthermore, students emphasized the ease of use and accessibility of digital media, stating that platforms like YouTube and mobile applications such as Duolingo and Cake made learning English convenient and flexible. The ability to 'study anywhere and anytime' was a recurrent theme, underscoring the flexibility offered by digital learning environments. This aligns with the concept of ubiquitous learning, where learning is not confined to traditional classroom settings but extends to various contexts through mobile and digital technologies (Crompton, 2013).

The preference for platforms like YouTube, where students can 'learn directly from native speakers,' also highlights the importance of authentic language input in digital learning. This aligns with research emphasizing the role of authentic materials in language acquisition, which can enhance learners' exposure to real-world language use (Gilmore, 2007). The students' consistent use of various social media platforms to watch English content illustrates that they are actively seeking out English learning opportunities outside of the classroom. This shows that digital learning is a powerful tool for self-directed learning and language learning.

In summary, the data demonstrate a strong positive perception of digital media's role in English language learning. Students perceive digital tools as accessible, flexible, and engaging, facilitating both formal and informal language acquisition. The findings suggest that integrating digital media into English language instruction can enhance student motivation and improve learning outcomes.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research investigates students' attitudes towards informal English learning outside the classroom. Apart from attitudes, this research also shown the platforms that students prefer. Based on the result of questionnaire and interview collected the findings show that students have a positive view of informal English learning. Students become more positive every time they use digital media. On the other hand, students prefer to learn English using cellphone and digital media that can access English because it makes them more enthusiastic about learning.

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