



STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON USING DIGITAL MEDIA TO IMPROVE ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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Abstract

This study explores students' perspectives on the use of digital media to enhance English vocabulary learning. Using a qualitative approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with two university students who frequently engage with digital platforms for English learning. The findings reveal that digital media, such as mobile applications, online videos, and interactive websites, play a significant role in helping students acquire and retain new vocabulary in an engaging and flexible way. The participants highlighted the benefits of personalized learning, visual and audio support, as well as easy access to diverse vocabulary resources. However, they also noted certain challenges, including distractions and the lack of direct feedback. This study contributes to a better understanding of how digital tools are perceived and utilized by learners to support vocabulary development in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital Media; English Vocabulary Learning; Student Perspectives

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, students increasingly use various digital platforms that have become integral parts of their daily lives. The impact of these platforms is not limited to entertainment and social interaction but also extends to academic and language learning. One of the most prominent benefits is the opportunity for students to improve their English vocabulary through digital media. This topic is particularly interesting because it explores how students—who are not only users but also digital natives—perceive the role of technology in expanding their vocabulary. Digital media such as mobile learning applications, online courses, podcasts, educational YouTube channels, as well as social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok offer innovative and engaging ways for students to enrich their English vocabulary outside traditional classrooms.

The importance of this topic lies in the changing landscape of education. With the increasing integration of technology in education, interest in how digital media can support language learning has also grown. Numerous studies have demonstrated the potential of digital tools to increase motivation, broaden exposure to authentic language, and provide flexible learning environments. For example, Lai & Wang (2025) in the journal *Language Learning & Technology* reported that 82% of students felt more motivated to learn English vocabulary when using digital media compared to traditional methods. This finding suggests that digital media not only serve as supportive tools but also as crucial elements that can transform how vocabulary is learned and retained.

Nevertheless, there remains a research gap regarding how Indonesian university students perceive the use of digital media in vocabulary learning. While global studies have documented the benefits and challenges of digital learning, localized studies are important because cultural and contextual factors can significantly influence how students interact with digital tools. This study aims to fill that gap by exploring Indonesian students' perspectives and identifying how they view the effectiveness, challenges, and opportunities associated with using digital media to improve English vocabulary.

Moreover, recent literature shows that digital media can support the learning process by making vocabulary acquisition more contextual and engaging. For example, Hoang et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of meaningful vocabulary exposure for long-term retention. Digital platforms such as language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, Memrise) and interactive videos provide such contexts through gamified exercises, real-life dialogues, and immediate feedback. Holliday (2006) also argue that digital media enable personalized learning, allowing students to tailor vocabulary acquisition to their interests and goals. However, it is important to recognize that although digital media offer many advantages, challenges such as distraction, digital fatigue, and lack of guidance can hinder effective.

To explore these issues, this research employed a qualitative method by conducting in-depth interviews with two female university students, both aged 20, who regularly use digital media to enhance their English vocabulary. The aim of this study is to explore student perspectives on the use of digital platforms for vocabulary acquisition and how these tools influence their motivation, comprehension, and learning outcomes.

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify students' perceptions of using digital media in learning English vocabulary
2. To explore what types of digital platforms are most commonly used and why.
3. To understand the effectiveness and challenges of digital media as perceived by students in vocabulary mastery.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the students' experiences and perceptions of using digital media and learning English vocabulary?
2. What kinds of digital media do they find most helpful?
3. What benefits and challenges do they encounter when using digital media for vocabulary development?

The insights from this study offer valuable input for educators and policymakers to develop more engaging and contextually appropriate strategies for vocabulary instruction using technology. In the digital age, incorporating students' voices is crucial in designing effective learning environments that align with their preferences and digital habits.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach. This research involved two 20-year-old female students from a university in Indonesia who participated in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of their experiences in using digital media to improve their English vocabulary.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling, which involved choosing individuals who had relevant experiences and fit the research objectives. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively to illustrate how students perceive the use of digital media in expanding their English vocabulary.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The use of Instagram as a digital media platform has attracted students' interest in learning English vocabulary. During the interviews, both participants, N1 and N2, shared their experiences of using Instagram to improve their vocabulary skills in a fun and engaging way.

Table 1. Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Current Place	Digital Media Used	Challenges	Experience Level
N1	F	20	Makassar, Indonesia	Instagram, Google Translate	Internet Connection	Intermediate
N2	F	20	Makassar, Indonesia	Instagram, Animated Videos	There are no significant obstacles	Intermediate

Interview Report and Analysis on the Use of Digital Media for Learning English Vocabulary

Learning English vocabulary is one of the most important aspects that language learners need to master in this era of globalization. Various methods and learning resources have been utilized to enrich vocabulary, one of which is using digital media. In this report, I summarize the results of interviews with two informants, N1 and N2, who shared their experiences, challenges, and views about using digital media—especially Instagram and Google Translate—for learning English vocabulary.

Experiences Using Digital Media

The first informant (N1) explained how they use Instagram and Google Translate in vocabulary learning. They said:

"On Instagram, I follow several accounts that focus on teaching English. The content that these accounts share often contains English vocabulary, and that's where I learn new vocabulary. I also sometimes use Google Translate when there's a word I want to say."

This aligns with Stockwell (2010), who found that mobile platforms and social media encourage repeated exposure to new vocabulary in informal, yet effective contexts. Godwin-Jones (2018) further emphasizes that social platform allows users to engage with authentic language content in a visually rich environment, which enhances vocabulary retention.

N2 has a slightly different experience but also emphasizes the benefits of digital media. They said:

"It's quite helpful to improve my English vocabulary skills. For example, animation videos can help with vocabulary because they speak in context, making it easier for us to understand the content of the video."

This view is supported by Chen & Chung (2008), who state that animated videos provide learners with contextual learning that combines visual and auditory cues, enhancing vocabulary comprehension and memory. Nation (2022) also argues that repeated and meaningful exposure to vocabulary is essential for acquisition.

Why Choose Digital Media?

When asked why they chose Instagram and Google Translate, N1 gave an interesting explanation:

"I chose these media because Instagram is a social media platform I've used for a long time, and it's already very popular among young people nowadays. Besides, there are many English courses or content creators who like to make educational content about English. As for Google Translate, I chose it because it's very easy to use and very practical."

This is in line with Godwin-Jones (2011), who noted that familiarity and ease of use are key reasons why learners choose specific digital tools. Tools like Google Translate support learner autonomy and allow instant vocabulary access (Reinders & White, 2011).

Meanwhile, N2 gave a reason that focused more on how digital media supports understanding through visuals and audio:

"I find it easier to understand and memorize using digital media because what's shown matches what's being said."

That supports Kukulska-Hulme (2012), who highlighted that combining visual input with verbal information facilitates better vocabulary acquisition in mobile learning environments.

How Digital Media Helps Memorization and Comprehension

According to N1, digital media, especially Instagram, helps because the materials shared are usually relevant and commonly used by native speakers. They said:

"In the content presented on Instagram, the vocabulary is usually related to our lives and is often used by native speakers. That way, it's easier for us to grasp every vocabulary word given, making it easier to understand. However, it also depends on ourselves—how we repeat and practice that vocabulary. At this step, it can actually be 50-50 because there are people who watch often but only glance at it without repeating, so they can also forget."

This supports the notion proposed by Boers & Lindstromberg (2012) that retention is enhanced through meaningful repetition. Digital platforms such as Instagram provide students with contextual exposure to commonly used vocabulary, which strengthens semantic memory when reinforced with repetition.

N2 expressed something similar but focused more on the visual aspect:

"It can be done by watching videos while matching what's being said."

This learning strategy corresponds with the multimedia learning theory, which suggests that students learn more effectively from a combination of words and visuals (Mayer, 2022). Watching videos that integrate visual scenes with spoken language enables learners to develop stronger mental connections between words and their meanings. According to Hoang et al. (2022) such multimodal input aids in both memory encoding and retrieval.

In addition, Wei & García (2022) argue that contextual and visual input enhances deeper language can associate vocabulary with actions, emotions, or cultural elements shown in the videos.

Challenges and Obstacles

When asked about challenges, N1 answered that basically, they didn't find many obstacles except for technical issues. They said:

"As for challenges or obstacles, I think there aren't any because using digital media as a learning source is very practical. The only challenge is when there's no internet data."

Connectivity as a barrier to digital learning has been widely acknowledged. Warschauer & Healey (1998) note that digital learning success is heavily dependent on infrastructure and stable internet access.

N2 had a similar view, saying they didn't experience any significant challenges:

"So far, I haven't faced any challenges in learning using digital media."

This suggests that once the technical barrier is managed, digital tools are largely perceived findings (Hockly, 2024).

Handling Distractions

Distractions are a common challenge when learning with digital media, especially since social media platforms like Instagram are filled with entertainment content. However, N1 stated that they didn't feel distracted:

"Actually, when it comes to distractions, I don't think so, because my learning depends on what I watch or what appears when I open/use Instagram. As for Google Translate, I only use it when I need it."

This aligns with Reinders & White (2011), who assert that learner autonomy plays a crucial role in filtering distractions and using digital tools meaningfully.

Effectiveness of Digital Media vs. Traditional Methods

The question about whether digital media is more effective than traditional methods elicited different views from the two informants. N1 leaned more toward traditional methods:

"I think traditional methods are more effective because digital media isn't very efficient—it's not consistent or done regularly. Meanwhile, traditional methods can start from the basics to the complex in a clearer way."

They feel that traditional methods have a more systematic structure, making the learning outcomes more comprehensive and in-depth. N1 believes that digital media is often only used sporadically and not routinely.

On the other hand, N2 supported the effectiveness of digital media:

"In my opinion, digital media is more effective because now is the digital era, so people are more interested in learning using digital media."

They believe that digital media is already a part of daily life and more favored by the younger generation. The visuals and interactive presentation in digital media make it more relevant and aligned with current learning styles.

Advice for Friends

N1 offered advice that emphasizes the importance of repetition:

"My advice is to follow more educational accounts about English and watch often because it really helps. Something that's repeated often will be stored longer and faster in long-term memory."

Meanwhile, N2 gave practical advice that also highlights the importance of applying what's learned:

"My advice is to watch more while practicing and applying it in daily life."

CONCLUSION

Based on the interviews with the two informants, it can be concluded that digital media such as Instagram and Google Translate serve as easily accessible, engaging, and relevant sources for learning English Vocabulary. The use of videos, audio, and visual content helps facilitate vocabulary understanding because it matches the context of usage. However, the effectiveness of digital media still depends on the consistency and application of the materials by the learners. the main challenge encountered is limited internet access, while distractions can be minimized by focusing on relevant educational content. the advice for friends is to actively follow educational accounts and repeat the materials so that the vocabulary will be stored longer. This shows that digital media can be an effective alternative for learning English vocabulary if used properly.

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