



The Use of Technology as a Learning Medium for Young Learners: An Effort to Enhance Children's Engagement and Understanding

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly impacted the educational landscape, particularly in language learning for young learners. This study aims to explore the use of digital media as a learning tool to enhance engagement and understanding in English language acquisition. A literature review methodology was employed to gather and analyze data from relevant studies, including journal articles, books, and research reports published between 2021-2024. The findings suggest that interactive digital platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, and educational apps like Canva and Wordwall, play a crucial role in fostering language skills, increasing motivation, and supporting independent learning among young bilingual learners and Generation Z students. These digital tools not only facilitate language learning but also contribute to character development and the reinforcement of affective values. Additionally, the research highlights the effectiveness of these technologies in creating an engaging and flexible learning environment, which is particularly relevant in post-pandemic contexts and areas with limited resources. The study concludes that the integration of digital media in English language education is vital for creating a dynamic, student-centered learning experience, making it an essential component of contemporary educational strategies.

Keywords: technology, digital media, young learners, English language learning, educational apps

Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital technology over the past few decades has significantly changes in the field of education, including in language learning for children or young learners. In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), technology has become an inseparable part of children's daily lives, especially for Generation Z and Alpha learners who grow up surrounded by digital devices, online platforms, and multimedia resources. This condition requires teachers to design learning experiences that are not only pedagogically effective but also relevant to learners' digital habits and preferences. According to Kukulska-Hulme (2021), digital technologies provide opportunities for more flexible, personalized, and learner-centered language learning, while Hockly (2022) highlights that digital pedagogy supports greater interaction, creativity, and learner autonomy in language classrooms.

Traditionally, English teaching for young learners relied heavily on conventional media such as flashcards, puppets, songs, printed worksheets, and physical storybooks. These instructional tools remain valuable because they provide concrete visual support that helps children understand meaning and retain vocabulary. Studies by Shin and Crandall (2021) emphasize that young learners benefit significantly from visual and contextualized input, while Pinter (2017) explains that children learn languages more effectively when instruction is supported by meaningful interaction, visuals, and engaging activities. Similarly, Wright (2020) argues that picture-based teaching materials continue to play an important role in promoting vocabulary acquisition and comprehension among young learners, particularly in the early stages of language development.

However, recent developments in educational technology have expanded the range of teaching media beyond traditional tools. Interactive digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Canva, Wordwall, Quizizz, and teacher-created instructional videos have become increasingly common in English classrooms. Studies by Rashid and Asghar (2021) and Trust and Whalen (2020) found that digital media significantly increase student engagement, motivation, and participation in language learning activities. In addition, Setiawan and Wiedarti (2020) reported that multimedia-based learning improves students' listening and speaking performance because learners are exposed to authentic pronunciation, contextual

expressions, and visual reinforcement simultaneously. This demonstrates that technology functions not only as a medium of content delivery but also as a pedagogical tool that supports cognitive, social, and affective development.

The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the integration of technology into education and highlighted the necessity of digital readiness among teachers and students. Although the pandemic is no longer considered a global emergency, its educational impact remains significant. The sudden shift to online and blended learning revealed that digital competence is no longer optional, but essential for quality teaching and learning (Moorhouse & Wong, 2022). Technology is now viewed not merely as an emergency solution, but as a sustainable component of modern education that enables contextual, interactive, and accessible learning experiences.

In diverse educational settings, particularly where resources are limited, technology also helps bridge learning gaps by providing flexible access to learning materials and authentic language exposure. Teachers are therefore expected to move beyond their traditional role as knowledge transmitters and become creative facilitators and instructional designers who can adapt technology to learners' needs. As stated by Chapelle (2020), successful technology integration in language teaching depends not on the tools themselves, but on how teachers design meaningful learning experiences around them.

Previous studies have widely discussed the effectiveness of digital tools in improving language skills and learner motivation; however, many of these studies focus mainly on secondary school students or general online learning contexts rather than specifically addressing English teaching for young learners in blended post-pandemic classrooms. Furthermore, limited attention has been given to how digital technology can simultaneously support both language development and character education among young learners. This creates a research gap, particularly in understanding how teachers can strategically combine traditional teaching media with digital tools to create balanced, developmentally appropriate, and meaningful English learning experiences for children.

Therefore, this article aims to explore how digital technology can be effectively utilized in English language teaching for young learners. As a global language, English requires

teaching approaches that are dynamic, enjoyable, and easily accessible to children. By reviewing recent research findings and effective educational practices, this study seeks to demonstrate that the integration of technology not only enhances language competencies such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also contributes to increased learner motivation, the development of autonomy, and the cultivation of positive character traits from an early age. When used appropriately, technology has the potential to transform English language learning into a more vibrant, meaningful process that better equips children to face global challenges in the future.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative literature review method to examine the use of digital technology as instructional media in English language teaching for young learners. A literature review was chosen because it allows researchers to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize findings from previous studies in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular educational issue. In the context of this study, the method was considered appropriate because it provides broad insights into how digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Canva, Wordwall, and other interactive applications contribute to children's English language learning in the post-digital era.

According to Snyder (2019), a literature review serves as a research methodology that enables scholars to critically analyze and integrate existing knowledge, identify research gaps, and establish a strong theoretical foundation for further investigation. Similarly, Hadi and Afandi (2021) state that literature review is not limited to summarizing previous studies, but also involves critical evaluation to strengthen the originality and academic contribution of the current research. Therefore, this study did not merely collect findings from previous publications, but also analyzed patterns, pedagogical implications, and recurring themes related to technology integration in English language learning for young learners.

The literature review process in this study followed several systematic stages. First, the researcher determined the main topic, namely the role of digital technology in English language teaching for young learners. Second, relevant literature was identified through

academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, SINTA-accredited journals, ERIC, and ResearchGate using keywords such as *digital technology in ELT*, *young learners English teaching*, *YouTube for language learning*, *TikTok in education*, *interactive media in ELT*, and *technology for young learners*. Third, the selected literature was screened based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria consisted of: (1) studies discussing digital media in English language learning, (2) research focusing on young learners or elementary-level students, (3) peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings, and (4) publications released between 2020 and 2024 to ensure relevance to current educational contexts. Meanwhile, studies unrelated to English language learning, duplicate publications, and articles lacking clear methodological explanations were excluded.

After the selection process, ten relevant articles were chosen as the primary data sources for analysis. These studies included both national and international publications discussing the pedagogical use of digital tools in English classrooms. The researcher then conducted data reduction by classifying the findings into major themes such as learner motivation, vocabulary development, speaking improvement, teacher digital literacy, learner autonomy, and character education through digital media. The data were subsequently analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, similarities, differences, and research gaps across the selected studies.

The use of thematic analysis enabled the researcher to interpret how technology supports cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning while also identifying challenges such as digital distraction, unequal access to technology, and teachers' limited digital competence. Through this process, the study aimed to provide a reflective and evidence-based discussion of how digital technology can be effectively integrated into English language teaching for young learners.

By applying this systematic literature review approach, the study offers a stronger theoretical and practical understanding of technology-enhanced language learning and provides recommendations for teachers, schools, and policymakers in designing more meaningful, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate English learning experiences for children.

Result and Discussion

This study reviewed ten selected articles published between 2020 and 2024 concerning the use of digital technology in English language teaching for young learners. The analysis was conducted using a thematic approach to identify recurring patterns, major pedagogical contributions, and existing challenges in the integration of digital media such as YouTube, TikTok, Canva, Wordwall, instructional videos, and other technology-based learning platforms. The findings were grouped into four major themes: (1) digital media for language skill development, (2) technology for learner motivation and autonomy, (3) teacher digital literacy and pedagogical adaptation, and (4) character building and affective development through technology.

1. Digital Media for Language Skill Development

The first major finding indicates that digital media significantly contribute to the improvement of English language skills, particularly listening, speaking, reading, writing, and vocabulary development. Several studies consistently reported that interactive platforms provide authentic language exposure, contextualized learning input, and multimodal learning experiences that support young learners' comprehension and retention.

Sujarwo et al. (2023) found that the use of Canva, Sparkol Video Scribe, and Wordwall created a more engaging English learning model that improved not only students' language learning outcomes but also classroom participation. Similarly, Kurt (2021), through a quantitative study in Turkey, reported that students who completed technology-based tasks performed better in listening, reading, and writing activities compared to those using traditional assignments. Although the statistical difference was not highly significant, students demonstrated more positive attitudes and stronger confidence toward English learning.

The effectiveness of YouTube was also highlighted by Widiyanti et al. (2023), whose systematic review of 45 studies showed that YouTube supports vocabulary development, listening comprehension, pronunciation practice, and speaking performance by providing authentic and visually rich language input. This finding is strengthened by Setiawan and Novita (2024), who reported that YouTube improves vocabulary mastery, grammar

understanding, and learner engagement because students can repeatedly access contextual learning materials independently.

TikTok also emerged as an effective learning platform. Xiuwen and Razali (2021) found that short videos on TikTok improved oral communication skills by encouraging students to practice speaking in everyday contexts. Likewise, Sofeny et al. (2022) reported a significant increase in elementary students' vocabulary achievement, with mean scores improving from 55.00 to 86.87 after the use of TikTok-based learning activities. These findings confirm that short-form audiovisual content can support measurable improvements in language acquisition.

2. Technology for Learner Motivation and Learning Autonomy

The second theme reveals that technology integration strongly supports learner motivation, confidence, and self-regulated learning. Digital platforms create enjoyable, flexible, and student-centered learning experiences that encourage children to take greater responsibility for their own learning process.

Kurt (2021) found that students showed positive perceptions toward technology-based tasks because they felt more confident and motivated when learning through digital tools. Widiyanti et al. (2023) similarly reported that YouTube enhances learner autonomy because students can access learning materials anytime and anywhere, allowing independent repetition and self-paced learning. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for young learners and bilingual children who require repeated exposure and reinforcement.

Szymkowiak et al. (2021), through a large-scale quantitative study involving 498 Generation Z respondents, found that students strongly prefer technology-based learning over traditional classroom methods. The internet and platforms such as YouTube serve as major learning resources beyond formal classrooms, increasing students' willingness to explore knowledge independently. This suggests that technology does not only support academic performance but also fosters positive learning attitudes and long-term learning ownership.

3. Teacher Digital Literacy and Pedagogical Adaptation

The third theme highlights that the effectiveness of digital learning depends greatly on teachers' competence in selecting, designing, and implementing technology meaningfully. Technology itself does not guarantee successful learning outcomes without strong pedagogical planning and teacher digital literacy.

Astutik et al. (2022) found that English teachers in Indonesian primary schools successfully used teacher-created instructional videos to simplify complex materials, reduce students' cognitive load, and improve student engagement, particularly in low-tech environments. Students benefited from the ability to revisit learning materials independently, while teachers functioned as facilitators who guided learning more flexibly.

Similarly, Szymkowiak et al. (2021) emphasized that teachers' ICT competence significantly influences students' motivation and engagement. Teachers who are digitally literate are better able to transform digital tools into meaningful learning experiences rather than simply using technology for presentation purposes. This finding confirms that teacher readiness remains one of the most important factors in successful technology integration for young learners.

4. Character Building and Affective Development Through Technology

The final theme demonstrates that digital technology contributes not only to academic achievement but also to character education, affective development, and socio-emotional learning. English learning for young learners should not focus solely on language mastery but also on the development of values, responsibility, collaboration, and confidence.

Sujarwo et al. (2023) emphasized that digital literacy-based English learning supports character building by integrating cognitive, psychomotor, and affective dimensions simultaneously. Applications such as Canva and Wordwall were used not only to teach vocabulary and communication but also to promote discipline, cooperation, and responsibility through collaborative activities.

Oktavia et al. (2022) further found that young learners' motivation is highly dynamic and strongly influenced by emotional engagement. Teachers commonly used games, songs, repetition, and interactive activities to maintain students' interest in learning English. In this

context, technology strengthens affective learning by providing diverse and enjoyable instructional experiences such as educational songs, gamified quizzes, and interactive speaking challenges that align with children's developmental characteristics.

Overall, the ten reviewed studies consistently demonstrate that interactive digital media such as YouTube, TikTok, teacher-created videos, and various educational applications play a significant role in improving English language learning for young learners. These technologies function not only as content delivery tools but also as pedagogical instruments that support language development, vocabulary enrichment, learner motivation, autonomy, character education, and socio-emotional growth.

The findings also reveal that successful technology integration depends heavily on teacher creativity, pedagogical adaptation, and equitable access to digital resources. In the post-pandemic educational context, digital technology should no longer be viewed merely as an alternative learning tool, but as an essential component of responsive, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate English language teaching for children.

The integration of technology in English language learning for young learners supports a more holistic and balanced learning process when viewed through established educational theories. Based on the analysis of ten articles, digital platforms such as Canva, Wordwall, YouTube, TikTok, and other interactive applications contribute not only to students' cognitive development but also to affective and socio-emotional growth. This finding aligns with Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory, which emphasizes that children learn most effectively through interaction, collaboration, and scaffolded support within meaningful social contexts. Digital media allows teachers to create interactive environments where learners engage with language through games, videos, peer collaboration, and guided tasks. As explained by Sujarwo et al. (2023), media such as Canva and Wordwall function not only as visual aids but also as tools for embedding character values through enjoyable and meaningful activities. Similarly, Shin and Crandall (2021) argue that young learners require concrete, visual, and socially interactive learning experiences to develop language skills effectively. This demonstrates that technology-based learning creates an ecosystem where academic achievement and character development can grow simultaneously, which is particularly

important during early childhood as a formative period for values and lifelong learning attitudes.

From the perspective of Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (2021), the use of visual, auditory, and interactive digital content helps reduce cognitive overload and supports deeper comprehension. Young learners process information more effectively when words, images, sounds, and movement are combined meaningfully rather than delivered through isolated textual explanations. This supports the findings of Rashid and Asghar (2021), who found that technology use significantly increases student engagement and self-directed learning because learners can process content in more accessible and motivating ways. Likewise, Setiawan and Novita (2024) highlight that technology-based tasks improve learning motivation, confidence, and positive attitudes toward English because students are exposed to contextualized and multimodal input. In this sense, digital media functions not merely as instructional support but as a pedagogical strategy that facilitates differentiated learning and learner autonomy. By allowing students to learn at their own pace and according to their preferred learning styles, technology supports personalized instruction and strengthens self-regulation skills, which are essential for lifelong learning.

The increasing use of social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok in English learning can also be explained through Krashen's Input Hypothesis and Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Krashen emphasizes that language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input in meaningful and low-anxiety environments, while Bandura highlights the importance of observation, imitation, and modeling in children's learning processes. Short videos, songs, storytelling, speaking challenges, and authentic conversational content found on these platforms provide rich linguistic input that is both understandable and engaging for children. Studies by Widiyanti et al. (2023) and Sofeny et al. (2022) show that YouTube and TikTok effectively combine entertainment and education, creating enjoyable learning experiences that align with the digital habits of younger generations. When students participate in creating content, responding to speaking challenges, or imitating authentic pronunciation from digital creators, they actively engage in language use rather than passively receiving information. This strengthens vocabulary

retention, pronunciation development, and confidence in real-life communication. Therefore, social media-based learning bridges the gap between formal classroom instruction and children's everyday digital environments.

This discussion also reinforces the central role of teachers as facilitators who mediate the successful use of technology in the classroom. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework proposed by Mishra and Koehler explains that effective technology integration depends not only on teachers' technical skills but also on their ability to combine content knowledge, pedagogy, and technology appropriately. Szymkowiak et al. (2021) and Astutik et al. (2022) emphasize that teachers with strong digital literacy are more capable of selecting relevant platforms, adapting materials, and reducing students' cognitive load through effective instructional design. For example, teachers may use short animated videos to simplify grammar explanations or gamified applications such as Wordwall and Quizizz to strengthen vocabulary learning in enjoyable ways. Hockly (2022) further states that digital pedagogy requires teachers to move beyond being information transmitters and become learning designers who create meaningful, interactive, and student-centered experiences. Therefore, teacher professional development in digital literacy and pedagogical adaptation becomes a fundamental requirement for sustainable technology integration in young learner classrooms.

However, despite its significant benefits, technology integration also presents several challenges that must be critically addressed. Not all digital tools are suitable for every learner or educational context. From the perspective of Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2020), excessive multimedia input without clear instructional design may overwhelm learners rather than support understanding. In addition, disparities in access to devices, internet connectivity, and teacher training continue to create a digital divide, particularly in under-resourced educational settings. Moorhouse and Wong (2022) note that unequal access to technology affects both students' participation and teachers' ability to implement effective digital learning strategies. Without proper guidance, digital media may also become a source of distraction rather than meaningful engagement. These findings indicate that technology itself

does not guarantee successful learning outcomes; rather, its effectiveness depends on pedagogically sound implementation and equitable access.

Based on these findings and theoretical interpretations, several recommendations can be proposed to optimize the integration of technology in English language learning for young learners. First, educational institutions and governments should provide continuous professional development programs that strengthen teachers' competence in selecting, managing, and evaluating digital media according to students' developmental characteristics. Second, schools need clear policies that promote ethical, balanced, and child-friendly use of technology to ensure that digital tools remain aligned with pedagogical goals rather than becoming distractions. Third, collaboration among teachers, educational technology developers, and policymakers is essential to produce contextual, accessible, and culturally relevant digital content for children. In this way, technology functions not merely as a teaching aid but as a transformative bridge toward more inclusive, meaningful, and future-oriented English language learning experiences.

Conclusion

A review of ten research articles reveals that the integration of digital technology including platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Canva, and various social media as well as interactive applications has made a significant contribution to supporting English language learning for young learners and Generation Z. Interactive digital media has proven not only to enhance language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also to foster students' motivation, independence, and self-confidence. Moreover, technology offers opportunities for teachers to design learning experiences that are more engaging, contextualized, and aligned with the needs and characteristics of today's learners.

Beyond serving merely as visual aids, digital technologies function as pedagogical tools that support the development of students' character, social-emotional values, and self-regulation skills. In the post-pandemic context and amid infrastructure limitations, the creativity of teachers in utilizing digital media becomes a key factor in the success of adaptive and inclusive learning. Therefore, the use of interactive digital media should no longer be

regarded as optional, but rather as an integral component of English language learning strategies that are relevant, meaningful, and responsive to the evolving times and the needs of 21st-century learners.

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