

The Role of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) and Motivation in Enhancing Learners' English Communication Skills

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Abstract

This inquiry explores the role of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) and motivation in boosting learners' English communication skills. The ubiquitous usage of digital technology facilitates students participating with English through social media, online videos, podcasts, games, and language learning applications outside academic hours. The current study was directed to the 2nd semester learners of the Information Systems program at STMIK Pontianak using a quantitative research design. Data were grouped through questionnaire, and speaking tests to explore learners' experiences and the contribution of IDLE and motivation to their interaction proficiencies. The findings show that both receptive IDLE activity (RIA) and productive IDLE activity (PIA) provides precious exposure to authentic English use, increases motivation, and inspires learners' autonomy. The frequent, supports, resources both (RIA) and (PIA) and digital tools used even learners' autonomous motivation in learning language over time, it unconsciously influences learners' speaking competences. It also helps bond formal classroom instruction with learners' digital practices, making the learning process more pertinent and interesting.

Keywords: Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE), English competence, higher education, enhance, role.

Introduction

The shift from the traditional way of learning to technology-driven has changed the learning approaches today. Then, the teacher is not the source of the learning center anymore; otherwise, digital technologies would be everywhere, and informal digital learning of English (IDLE) would have appeared as the form in computer-assisted language learning (CALL). According to Lee (2019, 768), IDLE refers to autonomous and informal English learning in which learners make use of diverse digital tools-such as smartphones, laptops, computers, and online platforms like websites or social-media, outside of formal education (Min Lin Zou, et al., 2025). Then he (Lee, 2019c, p.116), in the table of taxonomy of IDLE based on Benson's (2011) four aspects, inserts that IDLE can emerge into two forms; those are the extracurricular and extramural. "Extracurricular" refers to semi-structured, certified, out-of-class, self-instructed, and self-directed activities, while "extramural" of IDLE covers self-directed,

naturalistic, out-of-class environments, no certification, and are independent of education programs (Zhang Ellen et al., 2022).

Some studies shed light on the fact that involving EFL learners with the real-life English context platform (YouTube, Facebook, etc.) may give some open-minded attitudes to English use (Yang, 2013), interaction ability (Yen, Hou, & Chang, 2015), and self-confidence (Lee & Drajati, 2019) (Zhang Ellen, et al., 2022). Masrai & Milton (2018) and Nguyen & Stracke (2021) argued ICT applied in learning may give benefits for learners, such as the improvement of vocabulary mastering and reading speed, the skill of applying English articles accurately, and the improvement of speaking and listening competences (Merliyani et al., 2022). Cardenas-Claros & Oyanedel (2016); Carraro & Trinder (2021); and Zhao (2020), today with the advancement in technology, language learning may take place in various contexts, including both formal and informal settings, which ease learners access to the target language through devices like smartphones and computers (Merliyani et al., 2022). Moreover, in the era of globalization, English is the primary international language across fields, such as English as the lingua franca in education, commerce, academia, science, and technology. Then fluency in English is a must, especially where English is required as a second language in Indonesia. Also, it is not just for conveying ideas, but also for determining students' communicative expertise (Susanti, 2025). Similarly, the English language has emerged as crucial for easing cross-border interaction, such as in searching career prospects abroad or pursuing international study programs (M. Awais et al., 2023).

Today, learning English as a foreign language (EFL) by means of formal education is not enough; an extra enlargement outside school is needed (Muhammad Najmussaib, 2022). Technology or online resources such as social media, podcasts, even other digital tools permit authentic sources, repeated experiences, and collaborative involvement (Lis Sujarwati et al., 2025). In line with Sarifa, Lee & Drajati (2020), claimed that integrating digital technology-based tools of IDLE into English learning enhances learners' interest and motivation to interact while also making the learning process more contextual (Konder et al., 2025). In this inquiry researcher has focused more on the specific component of English communication skills such as speaking, listening and interaction, then leads to research gaps which remains insufficiently discussed. Furthermore motivation has been widely acknowledged as a key factor in foreign language learning, particularly in informal, technology-rich environments as separate constructs. Then how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation enhance interaction ability, this become the gaps in hand study as follows:

1. How does the informal digital learning of English (IDLE) enhance learners' level of English?
2. What is the relationship between learners' motivation and their engagement in IDLE?

The 2nd semester students of the System Information program class 2A1 STMIK Pontianak academic year 2025/2026, as the partakers in this inquiry, consist of 30 members. They were selected as the participants in this inquiry since they are often engaging in social media, like YouTube, TikTok, mobile apps, and some other English learning applications, as the result of the questionnaire administered to them, then they are right to be chosen. STMIK is the High School of Management and Computer Science located on Merdeka Street, Pontianak.

Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE)

At present's highly digital also interconnected universe, second language scholars are becoming more actively involved within language learning experiences that take place outside the traditional classroom setting (LBC; Toffoli, [2020](#); Reinders et al., [2022](#)), which can be online or offline (Artem Zadorozhnyy, et al., 2023). IDLE may be defined as in accordance with Benson's (2021) four measurable contexts of out-of-class language learning (OCLL): Formality (e.g., formal, non-formal, or informal): the level of formal structuring in L2 learning; Location (e.g., within or outside the class setting) : where L2 learning takes place; Pedagogy (e.g., instructed or naturalistic) : to what extent practice of formal L2 teaching is involved; Locus of controlled (e.g., other-directed or self-directed) : to what extent learners take charge of their own L2 learning (Lee, J.S.2021. *Informal Digital Learning of English: Research to Practice*. Routledge).

It can assist learners develop the affective and communicative features of the target language learned in the supporting ways: autonomy, authenticity, group of practicing, and affective filter. It covers a range of doings, involving listening to videos, playing games, listening to podcasts, reading blogs, language learning apps such as Duolingo and memrise, and others media social form (Lee, 2022; Reinders, Lai & Sundqvist, 2022; Zadorozhnyy & Lee, 2023) (Afsheen Rezai, 2024). These virtual environments let learners looking for assistance, share thoughts, and getting feedback of their performance from the collaboration also negotiation both and native speakers (Fauziah& Novita, 2023). Technology and media social devices as learning tools outside classroom, even IDLE as the way to overcome the challenges of English as foreign language and English as second language (Rani, et al., 2019). Besides learners, teachers even may gain knowledge, experience and proficiencies in English through advanced, autonomy, technology-enhanced within digital atmosphere (Afsheen Rezai, 2024). Numerous advantages can be obtained through learning using informal digital learning of English (IDLE) beyond the classroom as explained initially, however some barriers such as restricted access to the technology, digital skill barriers, and likely distraction should be kept in mind (Fauziah & Novita, 2023).

Motivation

Wang Chuming (1989) declared that motivation is regarded as one of the significant issues impacting foreign language acquisition, then generally applied as the consideration for assessing learning success and failure (Meilan Jin, 2014). It plays a vital role in inspiring learners' decision making course after it is inspiring its power into learning goal (yanuarti). Also it is as one aspect that indeed states success in learning (yanuarti). It can be classified into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation in language acquiring is refers to learner's curiosity in activity caused it is enjoyable and involving in pleased, or can be stated the outside stimulated is needn't. Conversely, extrinsic motivation are motivated by the stimulation like the reward, the promotion offered, good scores etc (Yanuarti;).

Based on the aforementioned then this study intends to figure out the role or the effect of learners' motivation and IDLE to their communication competence.

Previous Study

Guangxiang, et al., (2025) in their inquiry entitled “Informal Digital Learning of English in Asian English as A foreign Language Contexts: A Thematic Review ” suggesting EFL teachers to be familiar with IDLE, integrate it into curriculum, having on going training for the future pedagogical implication of Asian learners’ condition with autonomy and creative informal language learners in a fast digital environment (Guangxiang, et al., 2025). Next, Arief, et al., (2022) reported in their study that both receptive and productive doings of IDLE, like reading, watching English movies, talking with foreigners, joining virtual English clubs indeed increase learners’ interactive competences of English (Arief Nugroho, et al., 2022). Fang2 et al., (2025) summed up in their inquiry that the three crucial mediators between IDLE and EFL learners’ involvement in technological environment are the flow, online self-efficacy, and behavioral intention, which may affect the learners’ engagement and affording precious implications either in its educational theory or virtual learning processes (Fang2,et al., 2025). The stages of learning through social media and English learning application may enhance each learner’s experiences of receptive competences, where there is no insisted of learning schedule and only rely on learners’ wishes (Fariha, et al., 2022).

Methodology

Instruments and measures

This is a quantitative inquiry of data with two parts questions: the participants’ demographic information (25 items) and IDLE (34 items) and speaking tests as the quantitative data. The questionnaire items consisted of (1) Others and supports; (2) Authentic L2 experience (3 items); (3) Resources and cognition (4 items); (4) Frequency and devices (5 items); (5) IDLE-enhanced- benefits (9 items); and (6) IDLE practices (8 items) (Zhang Ellen at al., 2022).The rating scale is the six point Likert scales ranging from “strongly disagree (1point) to strongly agree (6 point). The next step is the speaking performance as the quantitative data based on the speaking rubric aspects. It assesses the pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar also the comprehension. Then all data is analyzed using statistical calculation of SPSS.ver 25 of Double Regression.

Doubled Regression of three variables pattern: $\hat{Y} = a_0 + a_1x_1 + a_2x_2$

2.2 Participants

The 2nd STMIK learners of System Information program is the participants in this inquiry which consisted of 30 learners of differ senior high school background. English lesson as the compulsory subject in STMIK curriculum that must be taken in the semester as the working world demanded. Then they are as digital natives generation, then it is suitable become the participants in this inquiry, as recently data gained on Indonesian aged 16-64, released by We are Social (2020) 7 hours 59 minutes for normal routines of browsing internet, the routine using of smartphones is 4 hours 46 minutes and the average social media accounts per person is 10.1 (Lee, J.S. 2021. Informal Digital Learning of English: Research To Practice. Routledge).

Findings and Discussion

This stage will reveal how this inquiry is done systematically on how the data are obtained, analyzed and accumulated in quantitative design as the answers of the research problematics stated previously. The main purpose of this in hand inquiry is to figure out the IDLE activities and motivation variable to boost learners' communicative performances. IDLE activities both receptive IDLE activity (RIA) and productive IDLE activities (PIA) which may influence learners' ability.

IDLE model consisted of six components, they are IDLE-Practices, Others and Support, Authentic L2 experience, Resources and Cognition, Frequency and Devices, and IDLE-Enhanced Benefit (IEB). How are the components influence the IDLE-Practices (IP) and IDLE-Enhanced Benefits (IEB) components. Subsequently, all the data are gained through the IDLE

Questionnaires administered, questionnaire of motivation and the spoken tests. The questionnaire survey are as follows in Table 1 scales from 1-5 of Likert scales (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2= Agree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree)

Table 1. IDLE-Components

IDLE-Enhanced Benefits (IEB) (1-9)
Definition: All observed positive linguistic and emotional outcomes resulting from IDLE practices.
1. I find English tasks more engaging when I use technology.
2. Technology has facilitated my English learning.
9. Technology has helped me learn English more effectively.
IDLE-Practices (IP) (1-8)
Definition: Close interaction with RIA and PIA, focusing on the development of language skills.
1. I have spent the last six months using technology beyond the classroom to improve my listening abilities.
2. I have consistently employed technology outside the classroom for six months to strengthen my reading skills.
3. I have been actively using technology outside the classroom to improve my speaking skills for the past six months.
8. Over the past six months, how much have I relied on technology to access English content on knowledge-sharing platforms and engage in English activities?
Others and Support
Definition: Self-directed extracurricular IDLE activities, initiated by others and encouraged by key people, facilitating learners' autonomous use of technology. (1-5)
1. My teacher supports us to implement technology for English learning beyond the classroom.
5. My teacher offers valuable technology resources/websites /tools for learning English beyond of the class.

Authentic L2 Experience (AL2E) (1-3)

Definition: The experiences of learners as second-language users in online real-world communities or settings where English is used as a common language.

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1. How often have I used technology to browse English content or participate in English-related activities on international social media within last 6 months (INS, Facebook, Twitter, etc?)

 2. How often have I used technology to explore English resources on gaming platforms or participate in English-related activities within last 6 months?

 3. How often have I used technology to browse English content or participate in English-related activities on other platforms in the last 6 months (e.g. Google, Wikipedia, etc.)?

Resources & Cognition (RC) (1-4)

Definition: Learners' perception of the abundant resources in informal digital learning ecosystems and their initiative in guiding their own learning within them.

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1. I utilize technology to detect English course materials and experiences.

 4. I gradually use technology to boost my interpretation of English language course materials.

Frequency & Devices (FD) (1-5)

Definition: Time allocation on IDLE practices and the occurrence of IDLE practices with differ online devices..

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1. I have typically spenthours a day learning English beyond of class in the last 6 months.

 2. I have spent an average of.....hours a day on my tablet browsing content or involving in activities in English within the last 6 months.

From the questionnaire administered of IDLE components which influence learners' communication ability then can be summed up that the high to highest score is 16 students or 53% and from low to the lowest score is 13 students or 43%. In short can be concluded that it is around 41-60% range or medium category both high to highest and low to the lowest the role of IDLE to communicative competence.

Table 2. Percentage Category

Percentage (%)	Category
0 – 20%	Lowest
21 – 40%	Low
41 – 60%	Medium
61 – 80%	High
81 – 100%	Highest

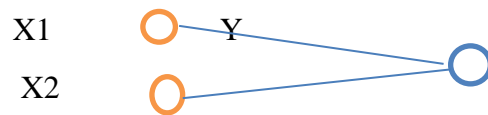


Figure 1 : Research concept

Besides, motivation data are also administered through the questionnaire to the participants in this inquiry of learning the language. The types of motivation is as delineated in Table 2. It consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some of the questions are 'I have a strong intent to figure out all aspects of English; I want to study English so well that it will accustom to me; I wish I will fluent in English; acquiring English is essential as it needed for my career, etc. The responds are displayed in the table 2.

Table 3. Types of students' Motivation

Motivation	Frequency	Percentage
Intrinsic Motivation	21	70%
Extrinsic Motivation	9	30%
Total	30	100%

Based on the table it displays that learners communication competence are influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which dominated by intrinsic motivation of 21 learners or 70%, it means intrinsic motivation is higher or dominant in effect learning in their communication acquiring of English. Conversely only 9 learners or 30% choose extrinsic motivation which affect their competence of English. Overall, can be summed up that intrinsic motivation is higher inspiring learners in acquiring communication ability. It is coming from their own willingness to learn the target language, then need no outside stimulation.

Subsequently, some oral tests are conducted in hand study as the next data. The speaking tests involving the lessons in curriculum of system information program, such as English business aspects. Some speaking aspects are assessed, namely pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency and comprehension. All data then are analyzed and accumulated, then it is displayed in the table below.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2628.386	2	1314.193	39.642	.000 ^b
	Residual	895.080	27	33.151		
	Total	3523.467	29			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.091	5.568		3.608	.001
	X1	.523	.073	.732	7.113	.000
	X2	.193	.072	.276	2.688	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Y

From the coefficient table the constant score is 20.091, the coefficient regression (a1) is 0.523 and the sig. is 0.000, then the coefficient regression (a2) is 0.193 and the sig. is 0.012. Subsequently the linear regression equation is as follows:

$$\hat{Y} = a_0 + a_1 x_1 + a_2 x_2 = \hat{Y} = 20.091 + 0.523x_1 + 0.193x_2$$

Then the linear regression should be tested its significance as shown in ANOVA, that is F and sig. score. F is 39.642 and sig. 0.000. Since the sig. is lower than 0.05 then can be summed up that linear coefficient regression is significant. It means the role of IDLE and motivation is indeed significant enhancing learners' communication ability of English.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) and motivation in boosting learners' English communication capability among second-semester students of the Information Systems program at STMIK Pontianak. This in hand study results show that both Receptive IDLE Activities (RIA) and Productive IDLE Activities (PIA) significantly support learners' exposure to authentic English use. The frequent use of digital media such as YOUTUBE, Facebook, WhatsApp, online learning application, and other English learning websites beyond the class unconsciously affect their communication skills.

Subsequently this inquiry explains that motivation has a crucial role in supporting the IDLE on learners' competence. The high motivation inspires learners to actively engage in digital learning activities, let independent learning, and supports continuous language practice.

Despite its essential outcomes, this study has its limitation which should be noticed: First, this study just have 30 samples size of the research which may not suitable for some research disciplines; second, the study based on self-reported data collected through questionnaires which may not of social representative and inaccurate assessment data. Finally this study did not differentiate the kind of digital platforms of IDLE engagement.

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