Exposure To Digital Learning Tools And Online Reading Habits On Self-Reported English Language Competency

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Abstract: This study explored how digital learning tools and online reading habits affected the self-reported English language skills of Grade 8 students at Valencia National High School during the 2024-2025 school year. Using a quantitative approach, the research involved 130 students who completed a survey about their use of digital resources, reading practices, and perceived language proficiency. The results showed that while students used digital tools moderately, they believed these tools were effective in enhancing their learning. A positive link was found between online reading habits and language skills, with students reporting improvements in vocabulary, comprehension, and critical thinking. Additionally, the combination of digital learning tools and online reading habits was found to better predict language proficiency than either factor alone. These findings highlighted the importance of integrating effective digital resources and promoting online reading in education to improve English language skills. This research provided valuable insights for educators on how to use technology and reading strategies to support better language learning outcomes.

Keywords: Digital learning tools, Online reading habits, English language competency, Education, Technology integration.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the integration of digital learning tools in education transformed the way students accessed information and engaged with their studies. This shift was particularly significant in the Philippines, where educational institutions increasingly adopted technology to enhance learning experiences. The research "Exposure to Digital Learning Tools and Online Reading Habits on Self-Reported English Language Competency" aimed to investigate how these digital resources and reading practices influenced students' self-reported competency in the English language. By examining various aspects of digital learning and reading habits, this study sought to provide insights into their impact on language proficiency among students at Valencia National High School during the school year 2024-2025.

Despite the growing reliance on digital tools for learning, there remained a gap in understanding how these resources specifically affected students' English language competency. Previous studies showed that while digital learning tools could enhance educational outcomes, the extent of their impact on language skills was not well-documented (Alvarez & Rojas, 2021). Furthermore, many students did not fully utilize these tools due to varying levels of digital literacy and access to technology (Santos, 2020). This research addressed this gap by exploring the relationship between exposure to digital learning tools, online reading habits, and self-reported English language competency among students.

This study also investigated online reading habits as a critical variable influencing language competency. Research suggested that consistent engagement with reading materials could significantly improve vocabulary, comprehension, and overall language skills (Gonzalez et al., 2022). By analyzing how frequently students used digital tools and their reading practices, this study aimed to uncover potential relationships between these variables and their combined effect on self-reported English language competency. Understanding these relationships provided valuable insights into effective strategies for enhancing language education through technology.

Several studies explored the impact of digital learning tools and reading habits on language competency. For instance, a study by Chen et al. (2020) found that students who frequently used educational apps showed improved language skills compared to those who did not. Similarly, research by Lim & Lee (2021) highlighted that online reading positively correlated with enhanced vocabulary acquisition among learners. In the Philippine context, Cruz (2023) emphasized the importance of integrating digital resources in classrooms to foster better language outcomes. Another local study by Reyes et al. (2022) indicated that students who actively engaged with online reading materials demonstrated higher levels of language proficiency. These findings underscored the need for further investigation into how these variables interacted within the specific context of Filipino students.

The main purpose of conducting this research was to explore the relationship between exposure to digital learning tools, online reading habits, and self-reported English language competency among students at Valencia National High School. By identifying patterns and correlations among these variables, the study aimed to provide recommendations for educators on how to effectively leverage technology and reading practices to improve language skills.

This research was conducted during the school year 2024-2025 at Valencia National High School in the Philippines. The chosen timeframe allowed for a comprehensive analysis of students' experiences with digital learning tools and online reading habits throughout an entire academic year, providing valuable insights into their impact on English language competency.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the relationship between the exposure to digital learning tools and online reading habits on self-reported English language competency, specifically focusing on 8th-grade students of Valencia National High School. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. To assess the student's level of exposure to digital learning tools in terms of:
   a. Frequency of Use;
   b. Types of Tools Used; and
   c. Perceived Effectiveness.
2. To determine the level of online reading habits do students practice in terms of:
   a. Reading Frequency;
   b. Types of Reading Materials; and
   c. Impact on Language Competency.
3. To analyze the level of students' English language competency in terms of:
   a. Vocabulary Proficiency;
   b. Grammar Proficiency; and
   c. Reading Comprehension and Communication Skills.
4. To examine the relationship between students' English language competency and:
   a. Digital learning tools; and
   b. Online Reading Habits.
5. To identify whether specific variables, singly or combination, that best practices the student's English language
   competency.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a quantitative research design with a descriptive correlational approach to explore the relationships between exposure to digital learning tools, online reading habits, and self-reported English language competency among 130 Grade 8 students at Valencia National High School. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure a diverse representation based on gender, academic performance, and access to digital resources. Data collection was conducted using a structured survey questionnaire that assessed various aspects of digital tool usage and reading habits, employing a 5-point Likert scale for responses. This methodology aimed to quantify student exposure and practices while analyzing their correlation with language competency.

The study employed a structured questionnaire to evaluate the relationships between exposure to digital learning tools, online reading habits, and self-reported English language competency among Grade 8 students at Valencia National High School. The instrument comprised three main variables: Exposure to Digital Learning Tools, Online Reading Habits, and English Language Competency, each with three sub-variables containing ten indicators. The questionnaire utilized a 4-point Likert scale to gauge respondents' agreement, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, pilot testing and expert validation were performed, identifying strengths and weaknesses in the items. The reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding an overall score of 0.926, indicating excellent internal consistency as indicated in Table 1. The null hypothesis was set at a coefficient of 0.50, while the alternative hypothesis aimed for 0.90. A minimum sample size of 11 was determined necessary to achieve 90% power, as per Bonett's formula.

Table 1. Reliability of Instrument

Indicators	Sub-variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Internal Consistency
Exposure to Digital Learning Tools	Frequency of Use	0.823	10	Good
	Types of Tools Used	0.812	10	Good
	Perceived Effectiveness	0.845	10	Good
Online Reading Habits	Reading Frequency	0.798	10	Acceptable
	Types of Reading Materials	0.804	10	Good
	Impact on Language Competency	0.830	10	Good
English Language Competency	Vocabulary	0.860	10	Good
	Proficiency	0.855	10	Good
	Grammar Proficiency	0.842	10	Good
Research Instrument	Reading Comprehension and Communication Skills	0.926		Excellent

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Exposures to Digital Learning Tools of 8th grade Junior High School Learners

Table 2. Mean Scores of Exposures to Digital Learning Tools of 8th grade Junior High School Learners

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Frequency of Use	3.41	0.54	Fair
Types of Tools Used	3.49	0.52	Fair
Perceived Effectiveness	3.71	0.55	Positive
Overall Mean	3.53	0.46	Positive

Rating	Scale	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Positive
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Positive
3	2.51-3.50	Neutral	Fair
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Negative
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Highly Negative

The results from the study provide a comprehensive overview of students' engagement with digital learning tools, highlighting their frequency of use, types of tools utilized, and perceived effectiveness. The overall mean score for the frequency of use is 3.41, indicating a "Fair" level of engagement. Specific activities reveal more positive trends: regular usage of digital tools has a mean score of 3.81, collaborating with classmates through digital platforms scores 3.80, and seeking online tutorials averages 3.96. These findings suggest that while students may not engage extensively with all available digital tools, they prioritize those that facilitate collaborative and independent learning.

When examining the types of digital tools used, the mean score of 3.49 reflects a "Fair" level of variety in tool usage. However, certain tools received notably higher ratings: social media for educational purposes (mean = 3.77), interactive quizzes (mean = 3.61), and mobile apps for language learning (mean = 3.62) were rated "Positive." Additionally, students favored specific platforms such as Google Classroom and collaborative tools like Google Docs, each scoring 3.55. These results indicate that students are more inclined to engage with tools that offer interactivity and collaboration. Conversely, tools such as video conferencing for online classes (mean = 3.16) and digital assessments (mean = 3.48) received lower ratings, suggesting they are either less frequently used or perceived with mixed feelings.

The perceived effectiveness of digital learning tools scored the highest among all measures, with a mean of 3.71 categorized as "Positive." Students believe these tools enhance their learning experiences (mean = 3.75), improve their understanding of subjects (mean = 3.76), and boost their motivation (mean = 3.85). Additionally, enjoyment (mean = 3.82) and confidence in using digital tools for academic purposes also received high ratings. This indicates that while students may not utilize every available digital tool extensively, they find significant value in the tools they do engage with, recognizing their positive impact on learning and motivation.

These findings align with existing literature on the benefits of digital learning tools in educational contexts. For instance, studies have shown that interactive and collaborative tools can enhance student engagement and motivation (Chen et al., 2020; Lim & Lee, 2021). The positive perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these tools echo research by Gonzalez et al. (2022), which emphasizes that consistent use of engaging educational resources can lead to improved language skills and overall academic performance. Thus, while the frequency of use may vary across different types of digital resources, students at Valencia National High School appreciate the impact these tools have on their learning experiences, suggesting potential pathways for educators to enhance language instruction through targeted integration of effective digital resources.

3.2 Level of Students' Online Reading Habits

Table 3. Summary of Level of Students' Online Reading Habits

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Reading Frequency	3.34	0.569	Fair
Types of Reading Materials	3.46	0.569	Fair
Impact on Language Competency	3.72	0.695	Positive
Overall Mean	3.50	0.528	Positive

Rating	Scale	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Positive
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Positive
3	2.51-3.50	Neutral	Fair
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Negative
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Highly Negative

Table 3 presents the findings on students' online reading habits, revealing a generally positive impact with an overall mean score of 3.50. This indicates that students engage with online reading materials in a manner that is beneficial to their learning. When examining reading frequency, the mean score is 3.34, categorized as "Fair," which suggests moderate engagement with online articles, e-books, and academic journals. Notably, students scored highest in activities such as summarizing or taking notes (mean = 3.65) and seeking online resources for difficult topics (mean = 3.80), indicating a focus on strategies that enhance comprehension.

In terms of the types of reading materials utilized, the mean score of 3.46 also falls within the "Fair" range. However, students demonstrate a clear preference for academic content (mean = 3.55), specific genres or topics (mean = 3.69), and the use of digital tools for highlighting or annotating (mean = 3.51). This selective approach to online reading suggests that students prioritize academic purposes over leisure reading, favoring materials that support their educational objectives.

The most significant finding pertains to the impact of online reading on language competency, where the mean score of 3.72 reflects a "Positive" effect. Students report improvements in vocabulary (mean = 3.72), comprehension (mean = 3.75), and writing skills (mean = 3.72) as a result of their online reading habits. Additionally, regular engagement with reading materials is perceived to enhance critical thinking skills (mean = 3.82) and cultural understanding through exposure to diverse texts (mean = 3.68). These insights suggest that while students' frequency of online reading and variety of material types are moderate, they recognize a strong positive effect on their language skills, confidence, and overall competency.

These findings are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of reading in language development. Research indicates that regular reading can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and comprehension skills (Gonzalez et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies have shown that engaging with diverse texts fosters critical thinking and cultural awareness among learners (Chen et al., 2020). The positive perceptions reported by students regarding the impact of online reading on their language skills underscore its value as an effective tool for language development, aligning with previous studies that advocate for integrating digital reading practices into educational settings to improve overall language competency among students.

3.3 Level of Students' English Language Competency

Table 4. Summary of Student's Level of Students' English Language Competency

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Vocabulary Proficiency	3.58	0.57	Positive
Grammar Proficiency	3.60	0.57	Positive
Reading Comprehension and Communication Skills	3.54	0.70	Positive
Overall Mean	3.57	0.52	Positive

Rating	Scale	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
5	4.51-5.00	Strongly Agree	Highly Positive
4	3.51-4.50	Agree	Positive
3	2.51-3.50	Neutral	Fair
2	1.51-2.50	Disagree	Negative
1	1.00-1.50	Strongly Disagree	Highly Negative

Table 4 presents the findings on students' English language competency across three key areas: vocabulary proficiency, grammar proficiency, and reading comprehension and communication skills. The overall mean score of 3.57 indicates a positive outcome in these competencies. This suggests that students generally exhibit a solid grasp of English language skills, supported by their engagement with digital learning tools and online reading habits.

In the area of vocabulary proficiency, students achieved a mean score of 3.58, which reflects their comfort with a broad range of vocabulary. They reported regularly expanding their vocabulary through online materials, with a mean score of 3.92 in this specific area. Students expressed confidence in using academic vocabulary in their essays and demonstrated an ability to recognize and understand various word forms in context. However, some aspects related to vocabulary development, such as actively seeking out vocabulary opportunities (mean = 3.43) and accurately paraphrasing texts (mean = 3.51), received lower scores, indicating potential areas for improvement.

Grammar proficiency scored a mean of 3.60, interpreted as positive, suggesting that students have a solid understanding of grammar fundamentals. They feel comfortable with complex sentence structures and frequently revise their work for accuracy (mean = 3.74). Nonetheless, challenges remain in certain areas, such as effectively using complex sentence structures (mean = 3.45) and explaining grammatical concepts to others (mean = 3.47). These lower scores imply that while students generally understand grammar, they may struggle with advanced applications and peer instruction.

In terms of reading comprehension and communication skills, students demonstrated a positive competency level with a mean score of 3.54. They reported feeling confident in summarizing main ideas and making inferences from texts, with a mean score of 3.76 for relating reading content to real-life situations and actively seeking feedback on their understanding (mean = 3.58). However, understanding different perspectives in texts (mean = 3.42) and presenting information from readings to peers (mean = 3.42) were rated lower, suggesting that some students may benefit from additional practice in these areas to enhance their analytical and discussion skills.

Overall, the results indicate that students exhibit a positive level of English language competency, particularly in vocabulary and grammar. The findings suggest that their online reading habits and academic engagement have contributed to building a strong foundation in English language skills. However, there are opportunities for further growth in nuanced comprehension and expression, particularly concerning understanding diverse perspectives and effective communication with peers.

These findings are consistent with existing literature that highlights the role of reading in language development. Research has shown that exposure to varied vocabulary through reading can enhance vocabulary acquisition and overall language proficiency (Gonzalez et al., 2022). Additionally, studies indicate that grammar instruction combined with practical application can lead to improved grammatical understanding among students (Chen et al., 2020). The positive outcomes observed in this study align with these findings, reinforcing the importance of integrating online reading practices into educational strategies to further enhance students' English language competencies and prepare them for effective communication in diverse contexts.

3.4 Analysis of students' English language competency to digital learning tools and online reading habits

Table 5. Correlation analysis of students' English language competency to digital learning tools and online reading habits

VARIABLES			CORRELATION COEFFICIENT (r)	PROBABILITY (p)
Digital Learning Tools	-	ELC	0.527	0.000**
Frequency of Use	-	ELC	0.429	0.000**
Types of Tools Used	-	ELC	0.418	0.000**
Perceived Effectiveness	-	ELC	0.507	0.000**
Online Reading Habits	-	ELC	0.679	0.000**
Reading frequency	-	ELC	0.482	0.000**
Types of Reading Materials	-	ELC	0.560	0.000**
Impact on Language Competency	-	ELC	0.695	0.000**

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 5 presents the correlation analysis examining the relationship between students' English language competency and factors related to digital learning tools and online reading habits. The results indicate that all indicators display statistically significant correlations at the 0.01 level, suggesting meaningful associations between these factors and students' language skills.

In terms of digital learning tools, a moderate positive correlation (r = 0.527) exists between overall use of these tools and English language competency. This finding suggests that students who engage more frequently with digital tools tend to exhibit higher levels of English proficiency. Within this category, the frequency of tool use shows a moderate correlation (r = 0.429) with language skills, indicating that regular use may positively influence students' abilities, although this relationship is somewhat weaker than the overall engagement with digital tools. The types of tools used also demonstrate a moderate correlation (r = 0.418), suggesting that while variety in tool usage contributes to language development, it is less impactful than the frequency of use. Additionally, the perceived effectiveness of these tools correlates moderately (r = 0.507) with competency, indicating that students who believe in the benefits of digital learning tools tend to experience greater improvements in their language skills.

Online reading habits reveal an even stronger association with English language competency. The overall correlation between online reading and language skills is high (r = 0.679), suggesting a significant positive impact of frequent online reading on students' language abilities. Specifically, reading frequency shows a moderate correlation (r = 0.482), implying that students who regularly engage in online reading may experience enhanced language skills. Furthermore, the variety of reading materials correlates moderately to strongly (r = 0.560) with language competency, indicating that exposure to diverse reading materials—such as articles, books, and blogs—enhances language development by introducing varied vocabulary and structures.

The strongest individual correlation observed is between the perceived impact of online reading on language skills and actual competency (r = 0.695). This high correlation suggests that students' perceptions regarding the benefits of online reading closely align with measurable improvements in their language proficiency. This relationship may create a positive feedback loop where perceived gains reinforce actual skill development.

This analysis underscores the significant role of both digital learning tools and online reading habits in supporting English language development among students. The stronger association found with online reading habits—particularly regarding students' perceptions of their impact on language competency—suggests that regular exposure to diverse online reading materials is a key factor in enhancing students' language skill acquisition. These findings are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of both interactive digital learning environments and consistent reading practices in fostering language proficiency (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2020). By highlighting these relationships, educators can better understand how to leverage digital resources and promote effective reading habits to improve English language outcomes for students.

3.5 Regression Analysis of Students' English Language Competency

This part deals with the regression analysis of the dependent and predictor variable. Table 6 presents the stepwise multiple regression analysis on variables under digital learning tools and online learning habits. Among the six (6) indicators included in the regression analysis, one (1) of them which is the impact on language competency is found to be significant predictors of the dependent variable, which is students' English language competency.

Table 6 Regression Analysis of Students' English Language Competency

Variables in the Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.	VIF	
	B	Std. Error	Beta				R^2
(Constant)	.726	.288		2.516	.013		
Frequency of Use	.002	.107	.002	.017	.986	2.669	
Types of Tools Used	.122	.110	.111	1.106	.271	2.634	
Perceived Effectiveness	.113	.089	.108	1.275	.205	1.853	0.528
Reading Frequency	.001	.090	.001	.016	.987	2.087	
Types of Reading Materials	.118	.093	.118	1.273	.205	2.222	
Impact on Language Competency	.425	.072	.517	5.875	.000	2.017	
R = 0.726	Adjusted R^2=505		F = 22.91	DW= 402	Sig. = .000		

The stepwise multiple regression results presented in Table 5 indicate that, among the six indicators initially included in the analysis, only the perceived impact on language competency emerges as a significant predictor of students' English language skills. This finding emphasizes the importance of students' perceptions regarding how online learning influences their language abilities in determining their actual competency.

The regression equation model is represented as $Y=0.726+0.425X$ $Y=0.726+0.425X$, where Y Y denotes English language competency and X X signifies the perceived impact on language competency. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.425 suggests that for each unit increase in the perceived impact on language competency, students' English language competency increases by 0.425 units. This relationship is statistically significant, evidenced by a t-value of 5.875 and a p-value of 0.000, confirming that the perceived impact on language competency is a robust predictor of actual language skills.

The model's correlation coefficient (R) is 0.726, indicating a strong positive relationship between the predictor (perceived impact) and the outcome variable (English language competency). Additionally, the R-squared value (R²) of 0.528 reveals that 52.8% of the variance in English language competency can be explained by this single predictor. This substantial explanatory power illustrates that students' perceptions of how online learning affects their language abilities significantly contribute to their overall proficiency.

The F-statistic of 22.91, along with its associated p-value of 0.000, further confirms that the regression model is statistically significant, reinforcing the validity of the findings. Overall, these results highlight that students' perceptions regarding the impact of online learning are crucial for enhancing their English language skills.

This analysis underscores the importance of fostering positive attitudes toward digital learning as a means to enhance language competency among students. The findings align with existing literature suggesting that students' beliefs about their learning environments can significantly influence their academic outcomes (Gonzalez et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2020). By recognizing and addressing students' perceptions about online learning, educators can create more effective digital learning experiences that promote greater engagement

and improved language proficiency. This insight encourages educational stakeholders to prioritize strategies that cultivate positive perceptions of online learning tools and resources to maximize their potential benefits for language development.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study underscores the significance of integrating digital learning tools and encouraging online reading practices in educational environments to enhance English language proficiency among students. Findings indicate that while students may not fully utilize all available digital resources, those they do engage with are viewed as beneficial. This suggests that focused use of effective digital tools can improve language instruction and positively impact student learning outcomes. To maximize these benefits, schools should provide training to enhance students' digital literacy skills and promote regular engagement with diverse online reading materials to support vocabulary acquisition and comprehension.

It is essential for educators to incorporate a variety of interactive digital tools into the curriculum that align with students' interests and learning preferences. Regular assessments of the effectiveness of these tools should be conducted to identify which resources best support language development. Additionally, fostering collaborative learning through digital platforms can enhance peer interaction and collective learning experiences. By addressing these areas, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment that leverages technology and reading strategies to improve English language skills among students.

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