The Role of Digital Media in Enhancing Students' Communicative Competence

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between students' communicative competence and the use of digital media, specifically YouTube, in English language learning. The research involves 25 third-semester students in the Academic Presentation course majoring in English Literature at Pamulang University. The study investigates how the use of digital media, specifically YouTube, enhances students' communicative skills by providing a platform for performance evaluation. Students who engage with digital media find that it boosts their confidence and responsibility, as their presentations can be viewed by a wider audience, encouraging them to refine their language skills. Qualitative research, including pre-tests, interviews, and observations, reveals a notable improvement in students' presentation skills when compared to offline performances. The findings suggest that digital media not only supports language acquisition but also promotes the development of communication, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of integrating digital media into language learning to foster communicative competence and enhance overall academic performance.

Keywords*: communicative competence, digital media, English language learning*

Introduction

English language learning is the activity of acquiring English language skills through systematical learning concept and method in organized learning institution. In pursuing the effective English language learning, strategies are designed. The popular English language learning strategies are those from Oxford and from Rubin which are called as Inventory Learning Strategies. Students need to own experience to attain ability of the language, especially in second language learning (Abilasha & Ilankumaran, 2018). As suggested by Dominguez (2025), language learning strategies preferred by English learners can determine the success of language competence, including communicative competence.

Students' English communicative competence can be defined as the ability of the students to perform their English language skills in communication. Ningtyas, et al (2023) states, "When students perform their communicative competence, their understanding and proficiency of the knowledge and skills can be easily judged". Hymes (1972) described communicative competence as the ability to use and interpret language in correct way in the interaction process in social environment. Here, interaction corresponds to opportunity to give and receive information in language learning process. D'Orazzi (2025) elaborates that such opportunity can contribute positively to learners' competence regardless of their background. Moreover, Poolsawad, et al (2014) emphasized that students need to use English fluently to fit with international communication as communicative competence has become an essential

skill nowadays. In defining communicative competence, Tarvin (2014) clearly states that "communicative competence is the ability to use language, or to communicate, in culturally-appropriate manner in order to make meaning and accomplish social tasks with efficacy and fluency through extended interactions. In addition, Karabayeva (2025) asserts that language skills should be accompanied by cultural knowledge as the embodiment of communicative competence in order to make successful communication. Ripki, et al (2024) found that digital media has potential to become a tool to improve communicative competence since it can provide abundant exposure of language. Digital media has been widely influencing language learning due to its' dynamic development. Digital media have been providing students with exposure to a lot of things including English language (Haryanto,et al, 2019). Furthermore, he suggested that "when the exposure to target language is enjoyable and pleasurable, it may, then, aid language acquisition". Digital media can be means of elevating students' performance in English language learning. Students are encouraged and motivated to do their best if their performance can be seen by the whole world through digital media.

This study is conducted to find the mutualism relation between students' communicative competence and the use of digital media. Digital media is limited to the use of YouTube Channel. The participants of this research are college students majoring in English Literature at Pamulang University. To limit the number of participants the research focuses on a class of the third semester in Academic Presentation subject. This subject is chosen because Academic Presentation is a course that involving students' communicative competence in directly in academic performance. The total participants are thirty eights students. Qualitative research methodology is done by analyzing students' competence before the use of YouTube channel as the media of their learning. The participants of this study are students of Academic Presentation class in the third Semester of English Department, Pamulang University.

English language learning context in Indonesia is English language learned as a foreign language. Albilasha & Ilankumaran (2018) suggested that in learning an additional language, whether it is a foreign language or a second language, the achievement of each learner will be different. Some learners can be more successful than others. This phenomenon commonly happens in English language learning in EFL (English for Foreign Language) context. The cause is that those EFL learners have already acquired their first and second languages.

At the college level, where English is learned as the major of study, English is still rarely used as means of active communication. Students of English study tend to use the Indonesian language not only to clarify important things but also to make everything clear. That is one of the reasons why the Indonesian language is still frequently, or perhaps almost most of the time used and even overused. The effectiveness of EFL classroom activities should be achieved by creating an effective practice of using English as the target language. Thu (2009) proposed that more opportunities for meaningful and creative practice should be provided by teachers to stimulate learners' real-life situations to motivate them and elevate their proficiency level.

Effective English language learning in college study where English Literature or English Education is the major of the study should put English as their main language. The product of this effective learning must be graduates who have high competencies not only in English knowledge but also in English communication.

The changes of English language learning environment should be supported by the changes in the curriculum and media. Curriculum plays an important role since it is the master plan to design the product of the learning. The curriculum must be supported

by media as means of teaching-learning activity. Therefore, media has a significant role in achieving the goals of the study since it is the thing every lecturer needs to create effective learning activities.

It cannot be denied that communicative competence is a competence that people can easily judge. One's communicative competence indicates the quality of that person. People see others through their communicative competence. Students of English Literature major should master the knowledge about literature itself and subjects given in their major. However, they should also acquire their communicative competence.

Communicative competence, a term coined by sociolinguist Hymes (1972), refers to the ability of language users to not only form grammatically correct sentences but also to use them appropriately in different social contexts. In the context of English language teaching (ELT), communicative competence emphasizes the integration of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and social knowledge to enable students to interact effectively in real-life communication (Canale & Swain, 1980). This shift from a traditional focus on grammar and structure to communicative ability marked the beginning of the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach, which aims to foster fluency and interaction in the target language. Researchers such as Littlewood (2004) argue that CLT prioritizes authentic communication, encouraging learners to use English in meaningful contexts, thereby preparing them for real-world social interactions.

The development of communicative competence in ELT is not only about mastering linguistic structures but also involves fostering socio-cultural awareness and pragmatic skills. According to Bachman (1990), communicative competence consists of both linguistic and strategic components, which together help learners navigate various communicative situations. This holistic approach also includes discourse competence, which refers to the ability to produce and interpret coherent and cohesive spoken or written texts. Furthermore, learners must be able to employ strategic competence to overcome communication breakdowns by using paraphrasing, gestures, or rephrasing (Canale & Swain, 1980). As a result, communicative competence is viewed as a multifaceted skill that integrates language proficiency and cultural context understanding.

In recent years, scholars have stressed the importance of integrating technology into the development of communicative competence. With the rise of online learning platforms and social media, students now have unprecedented access to authentic language use in various contexts, both formal and informal (Thorne, 2013). The use of digital tools, such as video calls and language exchange apps, has enhanced opportunities for learners to practice their communicative skills outside the classroom. Additionally, research by Hikmah (2019) highlights that by utilizing technology as media of language learning , access and opportunities to build students knowledge can be achieved. Thus, the integration of technology in ELT not only promotes linguistic proficiency but also aids the development of a more global perspective on language use. Digital media can be explained as text, graphics, audio, animation and video (Powers & Flowers, 2004). Pradana (2023) suggested that digital media have made several possibilities and given benefits to learning activities. The beneficial thing that can be obtained from the existence of digital media is to provide very broad access to information needed. Indeed, digital media helps people to access almost limitless information.

The role of digital media in education has become inevitable. Gunada (2017) stated that media has been playing important roles in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. It can be utilized to help teachers to enrich material sources, improve

students' language skills, and so on. Digital media can also be used as a platform to show students' performances.

The use of digital media in education has gained increasing attention for its potential to enhance both teaching and learning experiences. According to Meidasari (2016), digital media tools allow for more interactive and student-centered learning, enabling learners to engage with content in dynamic ways. These tools, such as educational videos, podcasts, and interactive apps, not only make learning more engaging but also provide opportunities for real-time feedback and personalized learning experiences. For example, multimedia resources can help students visualize complex concepts and encourage deeper understanding by allowing them to interact with the material. Additionally, platforms like learning management systems (LMS) facilitate the sharing of resources and peer collaboration, fostering an environment of continuous learning beyond the classroom (Smith & Johnson, 2021).

Bandura in Amsari, et al (2024) elaborates that social interaction is a factor influencing learners' competence. At the present time, it can be through digital media. Cope and Kalantzis (2009) go on saying that digital media allows learners to have sufficient exposure since digital media has diverse form of communication. Additionally, platforms like learning management systems (LMS) facilitate the sharing of resources and peer collaboration, fostering an environment of continuous learning beyond the classroom (Smith & Johnson, 2021). It is in line with the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) coined by Vygotsky as cited in Rahman (2024). Rahman (2024) on her review of Vygotsky's ZPD concept address how a learner needs not only guidance, but also a means to collaborate with his or her peers.

Moreover, the integration of digital media into language learning, specifically, offers unique advantages for enhancing communicative competence. As observed by Lee and Mark (2018), digital media can improve students' listening and speaking skills by exposing them to authentic language use in real-world contexts. For instance, students can engage with native speakers through video chats, access podcasts to enhance listening comprehension, or use language learning apps to practice pronunciation and grammar. Such tools provide immersive and interactive opportunities for learners to apply language skills in a variety of settings, supporting the development of their communicative abilities. As digital media continues to evolve, it becomes an indispensable resource in fostering not only language proficiency but also critical thinking and cultural awareness, which are essential components of communicative competence (Godwin-Jones, 2019).

Method

The qualitative aspect of the research includes in-depth interviews with a sample of students who actively engage with digital media in their language learning. The semi-structured interviews aim to explore students' perceptions of how these tools affect their ability to communicate effectively in real-life contexts. Additionally, classroom observations are conducted to observe the interactive behaviors of students when using digital media during lessons. These observations are analyzed to determine whether the integration of digital media facilitates more dynamic and meaningful communication practices among students. The qualitative data provides insights into the personal experiences and challenges that learners face when incorporating digital tools into their language acquisition.

The study's sampling technique involves purposively selecting students from a university-level English language program who have varying levels of proficiency and prior experience with digital media in their language learning. The data collected through interviews and observations are analyzed using qualitative method. This qualitative approach allows for a well-rounded understanding of how digital media can enhance communicative competence and provides valuable insights into its practical applications in English language teaching. As it is stated by Yahya, et al (2024) that students are empowered to take responsibility for their learning, which improves their fluency and motivation by engaging in practical communication tasks.

Results

The Academic Presentation class consists of fourteen meetings in a semester which is divided two parts. The first seven meetings are conducted before mid-term examination and the other seven meetings as the second half that are conducted before final examination. The first meeting of this class is used for pre-test and interview session. In pre-test session, participants are given a form consisting questions related to academic presentation theories, and their interest in performing their language skills. Interview session is a direct assessment of students' competence in performing their language skills to communicate. In this session, students are asked about their knowledge related to academic knowledge and presentation experiences. The second meeting is spent to discuss about presentation theory including what should be done to prepare an academic presentation. The following meeting discusses about how to write an academic presentation script. After discussing about how to determine the topic and how to write the script in a good structure, the students are asked to practice writing their academic presentation script in the following week.

The fifth week is spent to review the students works. The discussion about do's and taboos in presentation is held in the fifth meeting. This discussion includes what should dan what shouldn't be done during presentation. The explanation includes how to create a good visual aid in form of powerpoint, how to deliver a presentation in good gestures and postures, and how to perform formally and politely on the stage. The students are then asked to create their power point based on the script they have prepared before. Furthermore, the last meeting in this first half of the term is used to review the students work. After preparing both script and visual aid for the presentations, the students deliver their work during the mid-term examination in the class. The scoring items is based on the delivery, content organization, and enthusiasm The level of the score is started from 1 for those who still need improvement, 2 for those whose performance is fair, 3 for good performance, and 4 for excellent performance.

The second half of the term is used for some more practice and preparation for students' online presentations on YouTube. During this second half of the term, students are preparing their visual aids, managing their stage fright and practicing their performance in the class. Then in the final test, the students perform their presentation trough their own YouTube channel. The scoring items is the same with the scoring items used in the mid-term test.

The following table represents the data of the first performance that was conducted offline compared to the final performance that was conducted online on YouTube.

Table 1. Performance Result

Score	Achievement	Offline Performance	Digital Media Performance
4	Excellent	1 Students	5 Students
3	Good	5 Students	10 Students
2	Fair	10 Students	7 Students
1	Poor	9 Students	3 Students

It can be seen that from the 25 total participants, only a few showed good and excellent performance in the mid-term examination. Most of them showed fair and poor performance. In digital media performance, some students showed improvement, while some others still showed fair and poor performances.

Discussion

This table provides a detailed breakdown of performance evaluations for students based on their presentation skills, focusing on both offline and YouTube-based presentations. The table is divided into four score categories: 4, 3, 2, and 1, with each category reflecting different levels of achievement. A score of 4 indicates excellent performance, where the presenter demonstrates strong engagement with the audience through direct eye contact, dynamic speech, and in-depth knowledge of the topic. They are able to answer questions confidently, present well-supported arguments, and maintain audience interest throughout the presentation. A score of 3, on the other hand, indicates satisfactory performance, where the student uses eye contact and moderate enthusiasm but still relies on notes. They may provide some examples and data but lack elaboration or strong support for conclusions.

A score of 2 shows a less confident performance, where the student relies heavily on notes, speaks with minimal variation in tone, and struggles to answer questions thoroughly. The student's arguments may lack sufficient evidence, and their enthusiasm is limited. Finally, a score of 1 represents a very poor performance, where the student does not engage with the audience through eye contact, delivers the presentation in a monotonous tone, and fails to answer questions or provide clear explanations. In this category, the student's presentation lacks purpose, clarity, and depth, leading to minimal audience engagement and understanding. The table also differentiates between offline and YouTube performance, where the number of students in each category shows how many individuals fall into each achievement range for both types of presentations.

The data is supported by the result of the interview. It reveals that most students whose speaking score is significantly elevated feel more confident in giving online presentation through their YouTube channel because they think they do not need to face the audience directly and they have plenty of time to retake the video. This is a good way for them to prepare themselves by starting to be accustomed to speak in front of the camera. Furthermore, the interview also shows that they feel more responsible because everyone can watch their performance once it is broadcasted. It is another good way to practice.

Conclusion

The role of digital media in todays' life is inevitable, yet it brings advantages when it is utilized in a proper way. When students are challenged to broadcast their

performances, they are triggered to prepare and do the best. The feeling of being watched by the world encourage them to show their best skill. They enrich their vocabulary, they broaden their knowledge by seeking a lot of information, and they sharpen their skills in creating and presenting slides. In other word, they are improving their communicative competence in preparing and performing their presentation in digital media.

Acknowledgment

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