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Exploring the use of digital media to improve English speaking skills among Thai students in English Education Study Program

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores how Thai students in the English Education Study Program at a private university in Yogyakarta utilize digital media to enhance their English speaking skills. Through semi-structured interviews with a sixth-semester Thai student, the study investigates the adoption of platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, focusing on their effectiveness, perceived benefits, and challenges within the Thai cultural and educational context. Thematic analysis revealed key themes: adoption of digital media, motivational factors, effective learning strategies, social learning benefits, contextual learning, and technical and linguistic barriers. Findings indicate that digital media provides accessible, authentic, and flexible learning opportunities, enabling students to overcome cultural shyness and improve pronunciation, fluency, and pragmatic competence. Interactions with native speakers and peers via social media further enhance confidence and cultural awareness. However, challenges such as unreliable internet connectivity and difficulties with diverse English accents highlight the need for supportive infrastructure and broader linguistic exposure. The study underscores digital media's potential to address Thai students' unique needs, offering insights for integrating these tools into formal curricula to improve English speaking proficiency. This research contributes to the literature on technology-enhanced language learning and provides actionable recommendations for educators supporting Thai learners in higher education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, proficiency in English as a global lingua franca is becoming more necessary for social, professional, and academic development. Due to linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical obstacles, learning to speak English remains quite challenging for non-native speakers, especially Thai students enrolled in English Education Study Program at a private university in Yogyakarta. Although English is taught as a foreign language in Thailand, research shows that Thai students frequently have difficulty speaking the language because they are not exposed to many real-world English-speaking situations and because they are naturally shy, which prevents them from actively participating in speaking activities (Kirkpatrick, 2019). A 2021 study by the Education First English Proficiency Index ranked Thailand 100th out of 112 countries in English proficiency, underscoring the persistent gap in oral communication skills among Thai learners. This problem is most noticeable in higher education, as future teachers who

will be teaching English to the next generation must be fluent in the language. In a study to determine the difficulties of helping EFL learners improve their speaking abilities through classroom interaction, Alam and Ashrafuzzaman (2018) discovered that the primary issues experienced by the EFL students were anxiety, fear, lack of focus, and grammatical errors. In the same way, Chand (2021) found lack of vocabulary and nervousness are the main issues in developing speaking skills.

By providing Thai students the chance to communicate with native speakers, engage with real content, and practice speaking in relaxed settings, these platforms may help them overcome cultural obstacles like shyness (Fauziah & Sutrisno, 2025). According to a research by Pratiwi et al. (2023), for example, social media platforms increased the speaking confidence of Indonesian students by exposing them to a variety of linguistic inputs; this suggests that Thai learners may benefit similarly. Digital media integration into the curriculum is new but not extensively investigated at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta, where Thai students study English. Although digital tools are becoming more widely available, little is known about how Thai students use them to enhance their speaking abilities. Given Thailand's national objective to improve English proficiency for ASEAN integration and Indonesia's drive for internationalization in higher education, this gap is noteworthy.

By offering accessible, engaging, and real-world learning environments, digital media which includes websites like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and language learning apps, has revolutionized the process of learning a second language. A study by Chen (2021), looked into how Chinese students' acquisition of English could be aided by video-based social media sites like YouTube. According to their findings, self-paced learning is made easier by YouTube's organized content, such tutorials and vlogs, which also exposes students to real-world language usage, improving their fluency and pronunciation. The effectiveness of short-form video platforms such as TikTok was also examined, with Kim (2020) pointing out that their bite- sized material encourages micro-learning, which is especially useful for vocabulary acquisition and rapid pronunciation practice. These studies highlight how digital media's adaptability and accessibility let students interact with content that is appropriate for their skill levels.

Due to linguistic and cultural issues, studying English presents special difficulties for Thai students, especially when it comes to speaking. According to (Srisangachai, 2022), timidity and a fear of making mistakes, which have their roots in Thai cultural standards of "saving face," frequently prevent students from speaking out in class. Digital media offers a safe environment for practice without instant judgment, which overcomes this cultural barrier and makes it an alluring substitute. A study by Kirkpatrick (2020) added that because formal education settings mostly emphasize American English or regional variants, Thai learners frequently struggle with varied English accents, such as British or Australian. By exposing students to a wider variety of accents and cultural contexts, digital media can close this gap by providing access to a diverse range of linguistic input.

The advantages of digital media for enhancing English-speaking abilities are widely known. According to Zadorozhnyy and Lee (2023) stated that by offering real-world conversational contexts, exposure to authentic materials like YouTube vlogs and interviews improves pragmatic competence and fluency. This supports the claim made by Gilmore (2007) that genuine materials help close the gap between textbook English and communicating in everyday situations. Furthermore, the output hypothesis (Swain, 2005) highlights the significance of language production for skill development, arguing that digital platforms make it possible to record voice messages or repeat words from films, which are essential for enhancing speaking ability.

Technical hurdles including inconsistent internet connectivity were noted by Hubbard (2021) as major challenges in emerging countries like Thailand. Communication and video streaming can be interrupted by sluggish or unreliable Wi-Fi, which can cause annoyance and decreased engagement. According to linguistic research, non-native speakers frequently have trouble with accent variance, which might impair their ability to understand and feel confident when utilizing digital media (Derwing & Munro, 2019). These difficulties demonstrate the necessity of focused tactics and a supporting infrastructure in order to optimize the use of digital tools. With an emphasis on their motives, coping mechanisms, and difficulties within the Thai cultural and educational environment, the current study fills this knowledge gap by investigating how Thai students enrolled in an English education program use digital media to improve their speaking abilities.

Since the potential of digital media to improve English-speaking abilities is becoming more widely acknowledged, there remains a significant research gap concerning its specific application among Thai

students in the English Education Study Program at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta. The effectiveness of digital platforms like YouTube and TikTok in enhancing speaking confidence and fluency among other non-native English learners has been shown in studies like Pratiwi et al. (2023) and Chen (2021). However, little is known about how Thai students, who are limited by cultural factors like shyness and the fear of "saving face" (Srisangachai, 2022), use these tools to overcome their particular linguistic and pedagogical challenges. Furthermore, the integration of digital media into the curriculum at one private university in Yogyakarta is underexplored, particularly in addressing technical barriers such as inconsistent internet connectivity (Hubbard, 2021) and the students' ability to navigate diverse English accents (Kirkpatrick, 2020). This study seeks to address this gap by investigating Thai students' motivations, strategies, and challenges in using digital media to enhance their English-speaking proficiency within their specific cultural and educational context.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Thai students registered in the English Education Study Program at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta use digital media to improve their English-speaking abilities. Investigating how these students use different digital media platforms in their language learning process is the goal of the first study topic. Gaining knowledge of the precise applications of digital tools and platforms can help people comprehend their usefulness and applicability in enhancing speaking ability. This research is important because it shows how digital media may be used practically in language instruction, especially for students who might have specific difficulties learning a second language. The perceived advantages and difficulties Thai students face when using digital media for English speaking practice are covered in the second study topic. This study attempts to provide a fair assessment of the digital media landscape in language learning by looking at both the benefits and challenges. A fuller comprehension of the students' experiences will result from recognizing the advantages such as easier access to information and chances for interactive practice, as well as the drawbacks such as lack of direction or technological constraints. This dual viewpoint is crucial for creating tactics that can improve learning and remove any obstacles that might stand in the way of advancement. Lastly, the third study question discusses the more general difficulties and obstacles Thai students in the English Education Study Program at one of the private universities in Yogyakarta encounter when attempting to enhance their English speaking abilities through digital media. This investigation looks for systemic problems, such as institutional support, technological access, and the general learning environment, that can make it more difficult to successfully incorporate digital media into language learning. By comprehending these difficulties, the study may assist in the creation of tactics and suggestions meant to improve students' educational experiences, which will ultimately result in better test scores for English speaking. Together, these research questions are designed to be specific, researchable, and focused on uncovering the practical and contextual factors that influence the use of digital media in language learning. Through this investigation, the study aspires to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on digital media in education and provide actionable insights for educators and policymakers in the field of English language teaching.

Understanding how students use digital technology for language acquisition, especially in productive skills like speaking, is crucial in an era where these tools are deeply integrated into educational practices. The study aims to explain how digital platforms, applications, and resources aid in the development of oral English competence by looking at students' unique digital media using patterns and techniques. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to determine the perceived advantages and difficulties that Thai students have when practicing their English speaking skills through digital media. Understanding these attitudes can help us better understand how language learners use digital environments and the motivational, cognitive, and affective elements that shape their involvement. Additionally, this study aims to investigate the more general difficulties and obstacles that students have while trying to use digital media to enhance their English speaking abilities, whether they be pedagogical, technological, or sociocultural. By tackling these interrelated goals, the study hopes to offer a thorough grasp of how learner experiences, contextual dynamics, and digital media usage interact in the English Language Education Department.

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Approach

In order to investigate how digital media helps Thai students in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at a private institution in Yogyakarta improve their English-speaking abilities, this

study used a qualitative case study methodology. Because it enables a thorough analysis of contextual aspects, the case study approach was used to offer a comprehensive knowledge of participants' experiences, perspectives, and learning processes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Qualitative research is particularly suitable for this study, as it facilitates a nuanced exploration of individual perspectives and the cultural and educational influences shaping language learning (Yin, 2018). According to recent research, the qualitative case study method works well for revealing the complex ways that digital tools affect language learning. Qualitative case studies, for example, have shown how TikTok and similar platforms can improve learners' motivation, pronunciation, and fluency by offering dynamic and interesting information that is catered to their requirements (Widagsa & Fokatea, 2024). Furthermore, the methodology supports the identification of contextual factors such as cultural background and institutional environment that shape the learning process and outcomes for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. By employing a qualitative case study design, this research is able to generate in-depth insights into the specific challenges and opportunities faced by Thai students in the ELESP program. The flexibility of this approach ensures that the voices of participants are foregrounded, enabling a holistic understanding of how digital media contributes to their language development (Priya, 2021).

2.2. Participants

The study involved one sixth-semester student enrolled in the ELESP at a private university in Yogyakarta. Purposive sampling was employed to select the participant based on the following criteria: (1) Thai as their first language, (2) active use of digital media resources for English learning, and (3) willingness to participate in interviews and observations. The selection of a single participant was constrained by the contextual limitation that only one Thai student was enrolled in the sixth semester of the ELESP program at the time of the study. To protect the participant's identity, a pseudonym was used. The study prioritized depth over breadth, aiming to provide a rich, contextualized understanding of the participant's experiences rather than generalizing findings, which aligns with the case study approach (Yin, 2018).

2.3. Materials and Instruments

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, supplemented by document analysis of digital media content (e.g., YouTube videos, TikTok posts, or Instagram reels) used by the participant for English learning. The interview guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the participant's motivations, strategies, and challenges in using digital media to enhance speaking skills. Example questions included: "What digital platforms do you use to practice English speaking?" and "What difficulties do you face when using these platforms?" The interviews were audio-recorded with the participant's consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Additionally, the researcher reviewed relevant digital media content to contextualize the participant's learning practices, following guidelines for ethical document analysis in qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

2.4. Procedure and Data Collection

Data collection occurred on Monday, June 9, 2025, through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted in the ELESP library, a quiet and comfortable setting chosen to foster open dialogue. The interviews lasted approximately 45–60 minutes, allowing the participant to share detailed insights into their experiences with digital media. The researcher followed a flexible interview protocol, probing for clarification or elaboration when necessary to ensure depth in responses. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the data, following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six-step process: (1) familiarization with data through repeated reading of transcripts and review of digital media content, (2) generating initial codes (e.g., platform use, learning strategies, technical challenges), (3) searching for themes (e.g., "Adoption of Digital Media," "Barriers to Use"), (4) reviewing themes for coherence, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing a report with illustrative participant quotes. This approach ensured a systematic and rigorous exploration of the participant's experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

In addition to being informed by the study's theoretical framework, which includes theories of technology-enhanced language learning, these codes were created inductively, allowing patterns to be identified directly from the data (Warschauer, 2017). In order to find themes, comparable codes were grouped into more general, overarching topics that were closely related to the study's goals. Examples of these themes were "Adoption of Digital Media," "Effective Learning Strategies," and "Perceived Improvements in Speaking Skills." The stage of assessing themes necessitated a critical analysis of these

topics to make sure they appropriately represented the data, with modifications made to improve their coherence and scope. The defining and naming themes step entailed describing each theme in detail and giving it specific labels that communicated its importance, such as "Motivational Factors" for peer pressure and cultural shyness or "Barriers to Use" for linguistic and technological difficulties. In order to support each topic and successfully connect the findings to the study objectives, the final step in creating the report involved choosing interesting data extracts, such as participant quotations regarding practicing pronunciation or concerns with internet problems. The study's goal of comprehending the complex experiences of Thai students was in line with the analytical method's versatility and demonstrated ability to offer a rich, nuanced description of qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A thorough understanding of the role of digital media in language learning is provided by the themes that have been identified, such as "Contextual Learning" and "Advocacy for Digital Media," which highlight the psychological advantages, cultural relevance, and practical benefits of digital media while also addressing obstacles like accent differences and technical challenges.

2.5. Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were implemented. Credibility was enhanced through member checking, where the participant reviewed transcriptions and preliminary interpretations to confirm accuracy and minimize misinterpretation. Transferability was addressed by providing thick descriptions of the participant's background and the ELESP learning environment, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar contexts. Dependability was achieved by meticulously documenting the research process, including interview protocols, transcription, and coding procedures, allowing for transparency and replicability. Confirmability was ensured through peer debriefing with a supervisor and other students, who reviewed interpretations to mitigate researcher bias. Triangulation was employed by integrating data from interviews and document analysis to cross-validate findings, enhancing the objectivity and robustness of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The whole study process, including the questioning, data transcription, and coding methods, was painstakingly documented to guarantee trustworthiness. This not only makes the process public but also allows others to follow the same steps if needed. Making sure the findings fairly reflected participant experiences rather than the researcher's bias was the final stage in attaining confirmability. In addition, a supervisor and other students participated in peer assessments of the interpretations. By integrating data from interviews and document analysis, the researcher was able to improve the objectivity of the findings and cross-check them.

3. FINDINGS

3.1 Findings

The thematic analysis of the interview data revealed five key themes that encapsulate the experiences of the Thai student in using digital media to enhance English-speaking skills: Adoption of Digital Media, Effective Learning Strategies, Perceived Improvements in Speaking Skills, Contextual Learning, and Barriers to Use. These themes highlight the participant's motivations, strategies, benefits, and challenges in leveraging digital platforms.

3.1.1. Adoption of Digital Media

Mamuang (Pesudonym) actively engaged with digital media platforms, primarily YouTube and TikTok, to support English speaking practice. He noted, "I use several digital media platforms to learn English, especially YouTube and TikTok," (Translated into English) indicating regular use of these platforms. YouTube was accessed "almost every weekend, maybe an hour or two," (Translated into English) particularly for structured content like Ted Talks, while TikTok was used "almost every day but only for a few minutes," (Translated into English) for quick, engaging videos. The participant also used Instagram and Facebook for voice-based interactions, suggesting a diverse adoption of digital tools tailored to their learning preferences. All things considered, the participant diverse use of digital media demonstrates how combining multiple online resources can produce a rich and dynamic environment for enhancing English-speaking skills, accommodating a range of learning objectives and methods. This method encourages consistent use of the language outside of the conventional classroom context in addition to improving linguistic proficiency.

3.1.2. Effective Learning Strategies

Mamuang employed targeted strategies to enhance speaking skills through digital media. They described a specific experience with YouTube: “almost every day but only some I found a YouTube channel called English with Lucy... I watched the videos, paused after each example, and repeated the words out loud,” (Translated into English). This active repetition technique was effective for practicing difficult sounds like “th” and “r.” The participant also valued YouTube’s flexibility, stating, “I can choose videos that suit my level,” (Translated into English) highlighting personalized learning as a key strategy. Additionally, voice messaging on Instagram and Facebook facilitated interactive practice, as he noted, “We send each other voice messages or sometimes make short voice calls.”(Translated into English).

Mamuang’s learning strategies demonstrate a deliberate and reflective approach to improving English speaking skills through digital media. The use of YouTube channels like English with Lucy allowed for focused and self-paced learning, where pausing videos to repeat words aloud helped reinforce pronunciation and muscle memory. This method of active repetition is widely recognized as effective in language acquisition, particularly for mastering challenging phonemes such as “th” and “r,” which are often difficult for non- native speakers. By selecting videos that matched their proficiency level, Mamuang ensured that the learning material was neither too easy nor overwhelmingly difficult, fostering steady progress and maintaining motivation.

In addition to individual practice, Mamuang’s engagement with voice messaging on platforms like Instagram and Facebook introduced an interactive element to their learning process. Exchanging voice messages and making short calls provided opportunities for real-time communication, feedback, and conversational practice, which are crucial for developing fluency and confidence. This combination of self-directed study and social interaction highlights the importance of varied learning modalities in language development.

3.1.3. Perceived Improvements in Speaking Skills

Mamuang reported significant improvements in pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. Mamuang explained, “For pronunciation, watching YouTube videos with native speakers helped me hear how words should sound” (Translated into English). Fluency was enhanced through rapid-response practice: “Practising with voicemail... made me think faster and speak more fluently" (Translated into English). Vocabulary expansion was also evident, as he stated, “My vocabulary expands by watching videos with subtitles or learning new phrases on TikTok” (Translated into English). These improvements contributed to increased confidence, particularly in overcoming cultural shyness, as digital media provided a safe practice environment. According to the participant's reflections, digital media has been essential in improving several facets of their English-speaking skills.

Platforms like YouTube have improved their phonetic accuracy by offering real-world examples of native pronunciation, while interactive exercises like voicemail exchanges have boosted their fluency and ability to respond quickly. Their language repertoire has been further enhanced by the exposure to a variety of words through TikTok's short-form material and subtitled videos. Crucially, these improvements have resulted in increased self-assurance, which has allowed the participant to get past cultural obstacles like shyness and speak English more fluently. This combination of improved language skills and boosted self-esteem highlights the potent influence of digital media as a flexible and encouraging language learning aid.

3.1.4. Contextual Learning

Digital media exposed the participant to authentic, real-world English contexts, enhancing pragmatic competence. They noted, “I can watch real conversations, such as vlogs or interviews, that show how people talk in everyday life,” (Translated into English). This exposure helped them learn “....phrases in real-world contexts,” (Translated into English) bridging the gap between textbook English and everyday communication. Platforms like YouTube and TikTok offered diverse linguistic inputs, making learning more relevant and applicable to real-life scenarios.

Beyond the limitations of conventional classroom materials, the participant's use of digital media gave them important exposure to real-world language usage. They were able to study natural speech patterns, intonation, and cultural nuances that are sometimes missing from textbooks by watching vlogs, interviews, and informal chats on websites like YouTube. The participant was able to understand

pragmatic language elements like suitable phrases, slang, and conversational turn-taking that are crucial for successful communication because of this real-world setting.

Additionally, learning was made more immediate and useful by TikTok's short, entertaining movies, which featured common phrases and situational dialogues. Through a range of linguistic inputs from various speakers and contexts, the participant was able to adjust their language skills to a variety of social settings, improving their comprehension and engagement in real-life discussions. A deeper and more useful command of English is fostered by this contextual learning technique, which closes the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. To sum up, the development of pragmatic competence is greatly aided by the authentic, context-rich language experiences that digital media offers, which makes learning English more interesting, relevant, and useful for daily conversation.

3.1.5. Barriers to Use

Despite the benefits, the participant faced technical and linguistic challenges. They reported, “Wi-Fi is sometimes slow, so video buffers or voice messages are not delivered,” (translated) which caused frustration and disrupted engagement. Linguistically, understanding varied accents posed difficulties: “It is difficult to understand different accents, especially Australian or Scottish accents.” These barriers highlight the need for reliable infrastructure and strategies to address accent variation in digital language learning. These difficulties highlight how crucial it is to have dependable internet infrastructure in order to facilitate continuous access to online learning materials. Additionally, learners can become more flexible and self-assured in their ability to comprehend various English dialects by implementing focused tactics including exposure to a range of accents through carefully chosen content or accent training exercises. Maximizing the advantages of digital media in language learning requires addressing both linguistic and technical obstacles. In conclusion, developing an efficient and inclusive digital learning environment that promotes long-term progress in English speaking abilities requires overcoming barriers linked to infrastructure and accent.

3.2. Discussion

The respondent frequent use of YouTube and TikTok to enhance their speaking abilities demonstrates how these platforms have developed into useful resources for English language learners in the current digital era. Mamuang (Pseudonym) stated that she frequently uses TikTok and YouTube to practice speaking English. YouTube was used for one to two hours nearly every weekend, with TED Talks and English with Lucy becoming favorites because of their concise explanations and focused speaking drills. TikTok was used every day, if only momentarily, for its inadequate, interesting movies that provided conversational phrases and pronunciation advice. This is in line with (Chen, 2021) who discovered that short-form content on TikTok supports micro-learning, which is useful for rapidly acquiring new skills, while video-based platforms like YouTube offer structured content that encourages self-paced learning. According to Kim (2020), who emphasized that the adaptability of digital media promotes regular practice among language learners, frequent use of these platforms highlights its accessibility and attraction. Mamuang's experience demonstrates how useful it is to use websites like YouTube and TikTok for language learning, especially when it comes to improving speaking abilities. In addition to being in line with current research on microlearning and self-paced education, the mix of organized YouTube content with interesting, bite-sized TikTok videos demonstrates the versatility and allure of digital media in promoting consistent practice. In addition to improving language acquisition, this method makes learning fun and approachable for students of all skill levels.

Students' use of digital media is greatly influenced by motivational variables, especially when it comes to language acquisition and skill development. Mamuang was motivated to use digital media by an integration of environmental, societal, and personal reasons. First, a prevalent cultural obstacle among Thai students is shyness and a fear of making mistakes in the classroom. Digital media is preferred by Mamuang as a secure practice setting. One important incentive was the opportunity to practice in private without fear of criticism, supporting research showing that digital platforms help students feel less anxious by giving them more control over their learning speed (Richards, 2019). It highlights how students utilize digital media for language learning is influenced by motivating factors, especially cultural and personal ones. The situation involving Mamuang is a prime illustration of how online learning environments may provide a secure and encouraging space for students who might otherwise experience anxiety or insecurity in conventional classroom settings. In conclusion, students' use of digital media is

greatly influenced by motivational elements such emotional safety, cultural considerations, and personal preferences. Mamuang's experience is representative of a larger trend among students who use digital tools to acquire languages in search of comfort, control, and confidence.

Through focused practice with channels like English with Lucy, Mamuang actively used YouTube, pausing videos to repeat challenging sounds like "th" and "r." The output hypothesis (Swain, 2005), which highlights the significance of generating language to improve skill, is consistent with this active repetition technique. The respondent claimed that exposure to native speakers and subtitled content has improved their vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Significant language gains, such as enhanced vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and general communicative ability, are frequently the result of effective learning procedures. Mamuang credited exposure to native speakers and subtitled content for her claimed gains in vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. Watching films with subtitles, for example, increased vocabulary, and voice chatting on Facebook and Instagram enhanced fluency by requiring prompt responses. These results are in line with those of Zadorozhnyy and Lee (2023), who observed that digital media greatly improves linguistic competence by facilitating real language input and output. Thus, Mamuang's experience serves as an example of how successful learning techniques, such as active repetition and exposure to real-world material, can result in significant language development and enhanced communication abilities.

One important aspect of the respondent's learning experience was interacting with other students and native speakers on Facebook and Instagram. Speaking with overseas peers via voice messages and brief phone conversations increased confidence because they offered real- time feedback in a relaxed environment. The sociocultural theory, which holds that social interaction is essential for language development, is supported by (Vygotsky, 1978). By exposing them to a variety of linguistic and cultural contexts, the respondent's relationships with students from various regions including Africa, further enhanced the learning process and improved their confidence and cultural competency (Byram, 2020). In addition to giving the respondent exposure to real language, this type of social engagement helped them feel engaged and relevant to their educational process. The respondent was assisted in moving beyond textbook English by having genuine discussions with a variety of people, which promoted the useful application of language in relevant circumstances. Furthermore, these interactions' casual and encouraging atmosphere reduced anxiety, which made it simpler to take linguistic chances and grow from errors. Therefore, the respondent's experience validates the sociocultural approach to language learning by highlighting the significant importance that social contact and intercultural communication play in fostering language proficiency and global awareness.

Mamuang highlighted the importance of digital media, such as vlogs and interviews on YouTube and TikTok, in offering genuine, real-world settings for language use. These materials gave the student access to expressions that are frequently missing from standard textbooks and are utilized in real-world situations, such as shopping. This result is consistent with Gilmore's (2007) assertion that learners' capacity to handle real-life communication is improved by realistic resources. Mamuang's pragmatic competence, a crucial component of speaking skill, was enhanced by exposure to conversational English in natural contexts (Taguchi, 2019). Mamuang further underlined that this type of content helps them comprehend the tone, register, and cultural quirks of normal discussions in addition to vocabulary and grammar. For example, a learner may see how language changes based on context, speaker connections, and purpose by watching vlogs that show everyday activities or interviews with native speakers. The respondent was able to absorb normal speech patterns and use them more confidently in authentic encounters as a result of this intense exposure. Additionally, it improved their language accuracy and appropriateness in communication by teaching students to distinguish between formal and informal terms. Therefore, contextual learning greatly improves pragmatic competence and equips students for successful communication in real- world scenarios, as demonstrated by the respondent's utilization of authentic digital resources. Despite the benefits of digital media, Mamuang faced technical and linguistic barriers.

Slow Wi-Fi connectivity at his accommodation caused frustration, disrupting video streaming and voice and text message exchanges. These problems align with Hubbard (2021), who noted that technology obstacles are major roadblocks to digital learning in underdeveloped environments. Another language barrier was the respondent's difficulty comprehending various English accents, especially Scottish and Australian. This issue is well-documented in (Derwing & Munro, 2022), who pointed out that because non-native speakers have had little experience to accent diversity in regular classroom

settings, they frequently find it difficult. These issues show how crucial it is to take pedagogical and infrastructure constraints into consideration when using digital media into language learning. When students depend on real-time interactions or streaming platforms, technical problems like erratic internet connections might interrupt practice sessions and lower enthusiasm. Linguistically, when students encounter global variants of English online, their comprehension and listening confidence may be hampered by their lack of exposure to varied accents in typical classroom settings. Mamuang's experience highlights the necessity for language programs to include more exposure to a variety of accents and offer coping mechanisms for technological disruptions. Although there are many options for language development through digital media, its efficacy may be restricted by technical limitations and a lack of exposure to linguistic diversity issues, which need to be resolved to provide fair and thorough educational opportunities.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant role of digital media in improving English- speaking skills among Thai students in the English Education Study Program at a private university in Yogyakarta. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook enable students like Mamuang to overcome cultural shyness by providing safe, self-paced environments for practice, leading to enhanced pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. Targeted strategies, including active repetition and voice-based interactions, demonstrate the value of producing language and engaging socially. Exposure to real-world contexts through vlogs and interviews fosters practical language use, making learning more relevant to everyday communication. However, challenges such as unreliable internet connectivity and difficulties with understanding diverse accents reveal the need for better technological infrastructure and tailored support. Digital media offers accessible, engaging, and authentic learning opportunities, empowering Thai students to address linguistic and cultural barriers and prepare for their future roles as English educators.

This study's focus on a single Thai student limits the breadth of its findings, leaving a gap in understanding how digital media impacts a larger, more diverse group of Thai learners. The research does not explore how structured educational approaches, such as guided digital media curricula or programs addressing accent variation, could enhance outcomes. Future research should involve larger samples across different academic levels and contexts to identify variations in digital media use. Additionally, studies could test the effectiveness of combining digital media with classroom instruction, such as through blended learning, to improve speaking skills while overcoming technical and linguistic obstacles. These efforts would help develop practical, inclusive strategies for using digital media in Thai English language education.

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Declaration

Author contribution	:	First author initiated the idea, developed the interview instruments, collected, analyzed the data and wrote the initial draft. Second author helped collecting the data. The third author analyzed the data and revised the manuscript.
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Conflict of interest	:	The authors declare no conflict of interest.
Ethics declaration	:	We acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms with the regulations of my university and that I have obtained the permission from the relevant institute when collecting data.

We support GPELTL in maintaining high standards of personal conduct, practicing honesty in all our professional practices and endeavors.

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