

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Online learning platforms have become an important part of English as a Foreign Language instruction. This thesis examines how such platforms support language learning, what benefits are commonly reported, and what limits reduce their effectiveness. The topic is analyzed through a descriptive and comparative review of recent studies on EFL online learning, student engagement, digital readiness, and synchronous and asynchronous teaching. The reviewed studies show that online platforms can support vocabulary work, grammar practice, reading, writing, speaking, and listening when clear tasks, teacher guidance, and regular feedback are provided. At the same time, unstable internet access, weak learner motivation, limited interaction, and low digital readiness can reduce learning results. The thesis concludes that online learning platforms are effective not by themselves, but through purposeful use in a well-planned teaching process.

Keywords: online learning platforms, EFL, English teaching, student engagement, digital learning, language skills.

MAIN TEXT

The teaching of English as a Foreign Language has changed strongly because of digital education. Learning Management Systems, video meeting tools, mobile applications, online quizzes, and digital discussion spaces are now used in many language classes. Such tools make lesson materials easier to access and allow language practice outside the classroom. This situation makes the study of online platforms important for modern EFL teaching.

The main aim of this thesis is to explain the effectiveness of online learning platforms in EFL education. Attention is given to three questions: how online platforms support language skills, what conditions improve their value, and what difficulties limit their results. The thesis is based on a descriptive-analytical review of recent studies. Findings from systematic reviews and empirical studies are compared in order to identify common results.

Recent research confirms that digital tools can help language development. Lim and Toh reviewed studies on educational apps used in English language classrooms and found that different types of apps support different skills. Quiz apps were linked with vocabulary learning, puzzle apps with vocabulary and grammar, platform apps with reading and writing, and immersive tools with listening and speaking practice. The same review also stresses that technology becomes useful only when it supports teacher pedagogy and learner readiness (Lim and Toh). This finding is central for EFL instruction because platforms should serve the lesson goal, not replace the teaching process.

Student engagement is another strong factor. Alshammari and Alrashidi studied EFL learners in online courses and reported that behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement had a significant effect on achievement. In practical terms, regular participation, interest in tasks, and active thinking improve the usefulness of digital learning spaces (Alshammari and Alrashidi). A platform with many features may still fail when learners only log in without real participation.

The mode of online learning also matters. Alfares examined Saudi EFL teachers' views on synchronous and asynchronous learning. Synchronous classes were valued for saving time and reducing distance barriers, while asynchronous learning offered flexibility and extended time for processing materials. However, internet problems, weak communication, and boredom were reported as serious barriers (Alfares). These results show that one model cannot solve every teaching problem. A balanced combination of live interaction and independent online tasks is often more suitable for language learning.

Self-regulated learning is also important. Oportus-Torres and colleagues focused on EFL undergraduate students during emergency remote teaching and found that purposeful

support for self-regulation and engagement can strengthen online learning. Learners need clear goals, time planning, task monitoring, and reflection on progress (Oportus-Torres et al.). Without these habits, online platforms may turn into passive content storage rather than active learning environments.

A more recent study by Altinsoy and Boyraz examined online learning readiness and satisfaction in higher education EFL contexts. The study shows that engagement plays a moderating role between readiness and satisfaction. Better readiness does not automatically create satisfaction; active involvement in learning is also required (Altinsoy and Boyraz). This evidence supports the idea that platform success depends on both technical access and learner behavior.

Based on the reviewed literature, several practical conclusions can be drawn. First, online platforms are useful for repeated language practice, especially vocabulary review, grammar exercises, reading tasks, writing submission, and listening materials. Second, platforms create flexibility because lessons and resources can be reached from different places. Third, digital tools may support individual learning pace. Fourth, teacher feedback remains essential. Automated quizzes may check answers quickly, but speaking, writing, and deeper language use still need teacher response.

The effectiveness of online platforms should not be exaggerated. Weak internet access can interrupt lessons. Overloaded platforms can confuse learners. Too many independent tasks may reduce motivation. Limited face-to-face contact can also make interaction weaker, especially in speaking practice. For this reason, online learning should be designed with clear lesson aims, manageable tasks, stable communication, and realistic expectations.

The novelty of this thesis lies in bringing recent findings together in a concise EFL-focused discussion. Instead of treating online platforms as automatically successful, the thesis presents effectiveness as a result of four connected factors: suitable digital tools, active student engagement, teacher guidance, and learner readiness. This approach gives a more balanced view of digital language teaching.

CONCLUSION

Online learning platforms can be effective in teaching English as a Foreign Language. Strong results are possible when digital tools are linked with clear teaching aims, active participation, regular feedback, and learner responsibility. Research shows benefits for language practice, flexible access, and continued learning beyond classroom time. At the same time, online platforms cannot guarantee success without stable access, interaction, motivation, and careful course design. The main conclusion is clear: technology supports EFL learning best when used as a planned educational tool, not as a simple substitute for teaching.

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