

The Role of Self-Selected Digital Media in Students' Motivation to Learn English: A Qualitative Study at Tadulako University, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly digital learning environment, students have greater opportunities to choose digital resources according to their interests and learning needs. However, less attention has been given to how students' self-selection of different digital media is related to their motivation to learn English, particularly in the context of Indonesian university students. This study aimed to explore the types of self-selected digital media used by students and the perceived role of these media in supporting their motivation to learn English at Tadulako University, Indonesia. A qualitative descriptive research design was employed with 25 students from the English Language Education Study Program. Data were collected in two stages: a 10-item closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire was administered to all 25 students to identify their perceptions and experiences, followed by semi-structured interviews with five selected students to obtain deeper information about their motivation and learning experiences. The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis. Questionnaire responses were summarized descriptively to identify patterns in students' perceptions, while interview data were coded, grouped into categories, and developed into broader themes. The findings revealed that students used various self-selected digital media, including YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, movies, music applications, and language-learning applications. These media were perceived to support learner autonomy, motivation, confidence, and English skill development. Students also reported challenges, which they addressed through strategies such as using subtitles, replaying content, and practicing regularly. Overall, self-selected digital media played a supportive role in students' motivation to learn English and encouraged continued learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Keywords: *Self-Selected Digital Media, Motivation, Learner Autonomy, English Learning.*

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INTRODUCTION

English has become increasingly important for communication, education, and access to information in the digital era. The development of digital technology has expanded opportunities for English language learning beyond formal classroom instruction. Learners can access English through various digital media, including YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, movies, music applications, and language-learning applications. These resources provide flexible opportunities to encounter and practice English according to individual interests, preferences, and learning needs (Lai, 2019; Lai & Zheng, 2018). Consequently, digital media can serve as a complementary resource for English learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Motivation is an important factor in language learning because it influences learners' willingness to invest effort, participate in learning activities, and persist in learning. In English learning, sustained motivation is particularly relevant because developing proficiency requires continuous exposure and practice (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gardner, 1985). Digital media may support such engagement by providing accessible and interesting English-language content. However, students may experience digital learning differently depending on whether resources are selected by teachers or chosen independently.

In this study, self-selected digital media refers to digital platforms or tools that students independently choose and use for English learning. These include YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, movies, music applications, and language-learning applications. Such resources give learners greater control over the content, platform, and learning pace. This learner choice is closely related to learner autonomy, which involves learners' capacity to take responsibility for decisions concerning their learning (Benson, 2011; Lai, 2019). Self-directed use of technology may therefore provide opportunities for students to regulate their learning according to their interests and needs.

The relationship between learner choice and motivation can also be understood through Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Deci & Ryan (1985) explain that motivation is associated with the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of self-selected digital learning, autonomy may be reflected in students' freedom to choose platforms and content. Competence may be reflected in their perceived development in vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and confidence, while relatedness may emerge through opportunities to encounter English for communication with others. Thus, SDT provides a useful framework for examining students' perceptions of motivation when they independently select digital resources.

Previous studies have examined the relationship between technology use, learner autonomy, and motivation in English learning. An et al. (2023) found that self-directed technology use was associated with learners' motivation and independent language development. Lai & Zheng (2018) highlighted the role of self-directed mobile device use in language learning beyond the classroom, while Meghesli & Ouahmiche (2021) reported that allowing learners to select topics could support intrinsic motivation and engagement in English-speaking activities. Similarly, Daeli & Santosa (2025) emphasized the potential of YouTube to support autonomous English learning. These findings indicate that digital technology can provide opportunities for flexible and self-directed learning, although students' experiences may vary across different media and learning contexts.

Digital media also offer different forms of English-learning experiences. YouTube provides audiovisual exposure, TikTok offers short and accessible content, podcasts provide opportunities for listening practice, while movies and music expose learners to English in more contextualized and enjoyable forms. Language-learning applications may provide more structured practice. However, previous research has often focused on particular platforms or general technology use, leaving less attention to how students themselves select among different digital media based on their interests and learning needs, and how they perceive these choices in relation to their motivation.

This issue is particularly relevant in higher education, where students are expected to develop greater independence and responsibility for their learning. Students in the English Language Education Study Program at Tadulako University have access to various digital resources that may support English learning beyond formal classroom activities. However, limited understanding remains regarding which digital media students independently select, why they select them, how they perceive their motivational value, and what challenges they encounter when using them.

Therefore, this study explores students' use of self-selected digital media in English learning at the English Language Education Study Program of Tadulako University, Indonesia. Specifically, it identifies the types of digital media students select, examines their reasons for choosing these resources, and explores their perceptions of how self-selected digital media support their motivation to learn English. The study also considers students' perceived learning development and the challenges they encounter when using digital media. By focusing on students' experiences and perceptions, this study seeks to provide a contextual understanding of the relationship among self-selected digital media, learner autonomy, and motivation in English learning without assuming a causal effect.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design supported by descriptive data from a Likert-scale questionnaire. The qualitative descriptive approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore and describe students' experiences, perceptions, and motivation in using self-selected digital media for learning English (Creswell, 2012). The questionnaire was used to obtain an overview of students' perceptions and motivational tendencies, while semi-structured interviews served as the primary source of qualitative data. This combination enabled the researcher to obtain both a general overview of students' responses and more detailed accounts of their experiences with self-selected digital media. Such an approach is consistent with the use of qualitative inquiry to understand participants' experiences within their particular contexts (Creswell, 2012).

The study was conducted at Tadulako University, Palu, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, and involved undergraduate students in the English Language Education Study Program, Class C of the 2022 cohort. The class consisted of 25 active students who had experience using digital media independently as resources for learning English. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically criterion-based sampling, because the study required students who had relevant experience with self-selected digital media. Purposive sampling is appropriate when participants are selected because they possess characteristics or experiences relevant to the research questions (Palinkas et al., 2015). All 25 students participated in the questionnaire. From these participants, five students were selected for follow-up semi-structured interviews based on the following criteria: they had completed the questionnaire, actively used self-selected digital media for learning English, were willing to participate in an interview, and were able to provide detailed and relevant information about their learning experiences and motivation.

Two instruments were used for data collection: a Likert-scale questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire consisted of 10 statements and was designed to identify students' perceptions, experiences, and responses toward the use of self-selected digital media in learning English. The statements addressed aspects of learner autonomy, intrinsic motivation, competence development, extrinsic motivation, and learning challenges. The inclusion of learner autonomy was relevant because autonomy involves learners' capacity to make decisions and take responsibility for aspects of their own learning (Benson, 2011, 2012). The questionnaire also considered intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which represent important dimensions in understanding learners' reasons for engaging in learning activities (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms to all 25 participants.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected participants to obtain deeper information about their motivation, experiences, opinions, and challenges in using self-selected digital media. The interview consisted of 10 open-ended questions and was conducted individually. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was conducted in English. The interviews were used to elaborate on and provide deeper explanations of the responses obtained through the questionnaire. The use of interviews was particularly relevant because self-directed technology use may involve individual choices and experiences that cannot be fully captured through structured responses alone (Lai & Zheng, 2018).

Data collection was conducted in two stages. First, the questionnaire was administered to all 25 participants to obtain an overview of their experiences and perceptions regarding self-selected digital media for English learning. Second, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with five selected participants to obtain more detailed explanations of their experiences and motivation. The questionnaire was administered on March 5, 2026, followed by the interviews on March 10, 2026.

The data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive analysis supported by descriptive analysis of the questionnaire responses. The questionnaire responses were organized and interpreted to identify general patterns in students' perceptions and motivational tendencies.

The interview data were analyzed thematically. The researcher first transcribed and repeatedly read the interview responses to become familiar with the data. Relevant statements were then identified and assigned initial codes. Similar codes were grouped into categories, which were subsequently developed into broader themes. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure that they accurately represented the participants' experiences and were relevant to the research objectives. This procedure followed the general principles of thematic analysis, which involves systematic coding and the development and refinement of themes from qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The final themes were interpreted descriptively and connected with relevant theoretical perspectives and previous studies. In particular, the interpretation considered learner autonomy and motivation because students' independent selection of digital resources represents an important aspect of autonomous language learning (Benson, 2011; Lai, 2019). Previous research has also indicated that self-directed use of technology can be related to learners' motivation and independent language-learning experiences (An et al., 2023).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the researcher compared information obtained from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This triangulation helped identify consistency between the general patterns found in the questionnaire and the more detailed explanations provided during the interviews. The use of multiple sources of information can strengthen the interpretation of qualitative findings by allowing researchers to examine patterns across different forms of evidence (Creswell, 2012). The researcher also maintained detailed documentation of the research procedures, including participant selection, data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis.

Ethical considerations were also maintained throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study, and their participation was voluntary. Informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants' identities and personal information were kept confidential, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Types of Self-Selected Digital Media

The findings revealed that students used a variety of self-selected digital media to support their English learning. The media identified from the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews included YouTube, TikTok, language-learning applications such as Duolingo, movies, and music applications. These media were selected and used according to students' individual interests, preferences, and learning needs. The questionnaire findings showed that 11 students strongly agreed and 13 students agreed that they regularly used self-selected digital media, while only one student gave a neutral response. Thus, 24 of the 25 participants reported regularly using digital media that they selected themselves to support their English learning.

The interview data provided further details about the types of media used by the participants. One participant reported, "I usually use YouTube, TikTok, and language learning apps." The interview data also showed that participants used movies and music applications as additional sources of English exposure. These findings indicate that students did not rely on a single digital platform; instead, they selected different forms of media according to their personal preferences and learning activities. This pattern is consistent with Lai & Zheng (2018), who found that language learners used mobile devices beyond the classroom in selective and self-directed ways, particularly to personalize their learning experiences.

The participants also described specific ways in which they used these platforms. For example, S4 reported using YouTube and TikTok almost every day, as well as language-learning applications such as Duolingo and English-language movies or shows. The participant explained that YouTube and TikTok provided short videos, entertaining content, and examples of daily conversations, while movies and music were also selected because they

were personally enjoyable. Similar findings were reported by Khoirunnisa & Anjaniputra (2024), whose English Education students described social media as useful for English learning because it offered interesting, enjoyable, and flexible content, with YouTube and TikTok among the platforms used.

The findings further indicate that the choice of digital media was closely related to students' interests. S3, for example, explained that TikTok was selected because of an interest in watching TikTok content, while the variety of interesting and trending content made the platform comfortable and engaging for English learning. Similarly, S4 explained that the ability to choose topics related to personal interests, such as cooking or traveling, made learning English more meaningful and enjoyable. This finding supports the view that learners' preferences and perceived usefulness of digital resources influence how they engage with technology for language learning (Lai & Zheng, 2018).

Overall, the findings show that students independently selected several types of digital media rather than depending on a single learning platform. Their choices were associated with personal interests, enjoyable content, and opportunities to encounter English in different forms. The questionnaire and interview data therefore demonstrate that self-selected digital media constituted a diverse set of resources that students incorporated into their English learning.

Increased Learning Motivation

The findings showed that self-selected digital media were associated with increased motivation among students in learning English. The questionnaire results indicated that most participants felt more motivated when they used digital media that they selected themselves. For the statement, "I feel more motivated to learn English when using digital media that I choose for myself," 12 students strongly agreed and 11 students agreed, while two students gave a neutral response. Therefore, 23 of the 25 participants reported that using self-selected digital media made them feel more motivated to learn English.

The questionnaire also showed that students perceived English learning as more enjoyable when using their preferred digital media. Eleven students strongly agreed and 12 students agreed with the statement, "Using my favorite or self-selected digital media makes learning English more enjoyable," while two students responded neutrally. Thus, 23 students reported that their preferred digital media contributed to a more enjoyable learning experience. This finding is in line with Khoirunnisa & Anjaniputra (2024), who found that English Education students were motivated to learn through social media because the platforms provided interesting, enjoyable, and flexible content.

In addition, the findings indicated that self-selected digital media encouraged students to explore more English content. Seven students strongly agreed and 15 students agreed that self-selected digital media increased their interest in exploring additional English content, while three students were neutral. This means that 22 of the 25 participants reported increased interest in exploring English content through the media they selected themselves. Similar evidence has been reported by Lee (2021), who found that university students engaged in self-directed and autonomous English learning through YouTube and that the experience was examined in relation to students' motivation and learning attitudes.

The results also showed a positive tendency toward consistency in English learning, although the response was somewhat less strong than the other motivation-related statements. Seven students strongly agreed and 11 students agreed that self-selected digital media made them more interested and consistent in learning English. Six students were neutral and one student disagreed. Therefore, 18 of the 25 participants expressed agreement that self-selected digital media encouraged greater interest and consistency in their English learning.

The interview findings supported these questionnaire results. Students described learning through self-selected digital media as enjoyable and less boring. The qualitative coding identified enjoyment, interest, curiosity, and consistency as codes related to intrinsic motivation. One participant explained, "Learning feels like entertainment," while another stated, "I become more motivated because I choose the content myself." These experiences are

consistent with recent research showing that digital and social-media-based English learning can support motivation when learners perceive the learning environment as engaging and personally meaningful (Hu et al., 2025).

The interview data further showed that students' motivation was related to their personal interests and the freedom to choose content. For example, S4 explained that YouTube and TikTok were attractive because students could find short videos, entertaining content, and daily conversations without feeling as though they were formally studying. The participant also reported feeling more motivated when choosing topics that matched personal interests, such as cooking or traveling.

Overall, the findings indicate that students generally experienced self-selected digital media as motivating, enjoyable, and interesting for learning English. The questionnaire results showed strong positive responses across the motivation-related statements, while the interview data provided explanations of how enjoyment, personal interests, and freedom of choice were experienced by the participants. These findings suggest that students' own preferences played an important role in their motivation to engage with English through digital media.

Learner Autonomy

The findings showed that self-selected digital media provided students with opportunities to exercise greater independence in learning English. The questionnaire results indicated that most students regularly used digital media that they selected themselves. For the statement, "I regularly use self-selected digital media (such as YouTube, TikTok, etc.) to learn English," 11 students strongly agreed and 13 students agreed, while one student responded neutrally. Thus, 24 of the 25 participants reported regularly using self-selected digital media for their English learning.

The questionnaire also revealed that students perceived the freedom to choose their own digital media as contributing to their independence as learners. For the statement, "Choosing my own digital media helps me become a more independent learner," six students strongly agreed and 16 students agreed. Two students gave neutral responses, while one student disagreed. Therefore, 22 of the 25 participants expressed agreement that choosing their own digital media helped them become more independent learners. This finding is consistent with [Lai & Zheng \(2018\)](#), who conceptualized mobile language learning beyond the classroom in terms of learners' agentic and self-directed use of technology.

Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that students used self-selected digital media to continue learning English beyond the classroom. Ten students strongly agreed and 14 students agreed with the statement, "Self-selected digital media help me learn English outside classroom," while one student responded neutrally. No students disagreed with the statement. This indicates that 24 of the 25 participants perceived self-selected digital media as useful for supporting English learning outside formal classroom activities. This pattern also corresponds with [Lai & Zheng \(2018\)](#) finding that learners used mobile devices to create personalized language-learning experiences beyond formal classroom settings.

The interview data provided further insight into how students experienced this independence. One participant stated, "I can choose videos based on my interests," indicating that students had the freedom to determine the content they wanted to access. The interview coding also identified freedom to choose, preferred content, and independent learning as codes associated with learner autonomy.

The interview findings further showed that students made decisions about the digital platforms and learning content they used. They did not rely entirely on materials provided through formal classroom instruction but selected resources that they considered suitable for their interests and learning needs. Students could therefore determine the type of English content they wanted to encounter and when they wanted to engage with it. Recent research on digital learner autonomy similarly highlights students' independent learning behaviors while also identifying challenges associated with managing learning in digital environments ([Zhu et al., 2025](#)).

Overall, the findings indicate that self-selected digital media gave students greater control over aspects of their English learning, particularly in choosing platforms, selecting content, and continuing learning outside the classroom. The questionnaire and interview data consistently showed that students experienced greater independence when they were able to make their own choices regarding digital learning resources.

Competence Development

The findings indicated that students perceived improvements in several aspects of their English competence after regularly using self-selected digital media. The interview data identified language skill improvement and increased confidence as important codes within the competence development theme. One participant stated, "I improve my listening, speaking, and vocabulary," indicating that students perceived self-selected digital media as providing opportunities to develop their English skills.

The students reported perceived improvement particularly in vocabulary, listening, speaking, and pronunciation. These improvements were associated with their regular exposure to English through different forms of digital content. The final thematic analysis showed that students perceived improvements in vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and confidence after using self-selected digital media. Research on incidental English learning through social media has likewise highlighted the role of platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok as sources of English exposure outside the classroom (Hidayat, 2026).

The interview data also indicated that increased confidence was an important part of students' perceived competence development. One participant stated, "Now I am more confident to speak English." This response was coded as increased confidence and categorized under competence development.

Students' experiences suggest that self-selected digital media provided additional opportunities to encounter and practice English beyond formal classroom instruction. Through activities such as watching English videos, listening to music, and repeating English expressions, students reported opportunities to engage with English according to their own interests and learning preferences. The findings therefore suggest that students perceived digital media as a supplementary resource for developing their English competence.

Importantly, the findings reflect students' perceptions of improvement, rather than objective measurements of language proficiency. Therefore, the study does not claim that students' English skills objectively increased based on a pre-test or post-test. Instead, the qualitative data indicate that students themselves perceived improvement in their vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and confidence. This distinction makes the finding more consistent with the qualitative descriptive design of the study.

Extrinsic Motivation

The findings revealed that students' motivation to learn English through self-selected digital media was not limited to enjoyment and personal interest. Some students also reported external goals that encouraged them to continue learning English. The interview data identified three main forms of extrinsic motivation: future career goals, academic needs, and communication goals.

One important external factor was students' future career goals. Some participants viewed English proficiency as an important skill for obtaining better employment opportunities. One participant stated, "I want to get a good job in the future." This response was coded as career goal and categorized under extrinsic motivation. The finding indicates that expectations about future employment provided an external reason for students to continue developing their English through self-selected digital media. Similar research on Indonesian EFL learners has identified future-oriented goals and practical considerations as important motivational factors in English learning (Rahmayana et al., 2024).

Academic needs also emerged as a source of extrinsic motivation. Students recognized the importance of English for their university studies and academic requirements. The

interview data indicated that some students used digital media to support their English learning because improving their English could help them meet academic demands.

Another source of external motivation was the desire to communicate with people from different countries. Students perceived English as an important means of international communication, and digital platforms exposed them to English-language content and speakers from different contexts. This provided students with a practical reason to continue engaging with English outside formal classroom activities.

Overall, the findings show that students' motivation involved both personal enjoyment and external purposes. While some students engaged with self-selected digital media because they found the content interesting and enjoyable, others were motivated by the perceived practical value of English for their academic development, future careers, and international communication.

Learning Challenges and Coping Strategies

The findings showed that although students generally reported positive experiences with self-selected digital media, they also encountered several challenges when using these resources for English learning. The main challenges identified from the interview data were unstable internet connections, unfamiliar vocabulary, fast speech, and distractions. These challenges were related to both technological limitations and difficulties in understanding English-language content. Similar research has identified limited internet access, distraction, and difficulties in evaluating digital content as challenges that may accompany autonomous digital English learning (Ikhsan, 2026).

One of the technological challenges reported by students was an unstable internet connection. This problem could interfere with students' access to digital learning materials, particularly when learning depended on online platforms. One participant stated, "Sometimes the internet connection is bad." The response was coded as poor internet connection and categorized as a technical difficulty under the theme of learning challenges.

Students also experienced linguistic difficulties, particularly when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and fast spoken English. One participant stated, "Fast speech is difficult to understand." This response was coded as difficulty understanding spoken English and categorized as a language difficulty. These difficulties were particularly relevant when students encountered authentic English content in videos or other digital media.

Another challenge identified in the data was distraction. Because students used platforms that also contain entertainment and non-educational content, maintaining attention during independent learning could be difficult. Distraction was therefore identified as one of the learning challenges in the final thematic analysis. This finding is supported by recent research on smartphone use among university students, which identified social media, entertainment applications, notifications, and multitasking as important sources of distraction during vocabulary learning (Agustiani et al., 2025).

Despite these challenges, students reported using several strategies to manage the difficulties they encountered. One participant stated, "I use subtitles and repeat videos." This response was coded as learning strategy and coping strategy. Replaying videos allowed students to listen to difficult expressions more than once, while subtitles provided additional support when students encountered unfamiliar spoken English. Research on video-based English learning has also found that subtitles can support vocabulary learning, particularly among older EFL learners (Chen, 2024).

The final thematic analysis also showed that students responded to challenges by using subtitles, replaying videos, and selecting enjoyable content. These strategies demonstrate that students did not simply stop using digital media when difficulties occurred; instead, they attempted to adjust how they used the resources to make the learning process more manageable.

Overall, the findings indicate that self-selected digital media provided students with flexible opportunities for English learning but also presented several challenges. The main difficulties involved technology, language comprehension, and distraction. Students

responded by adopting practical strategies such as using subtitles, replaying videos, and selecting content that they found enjoyable and relevant. Thus, the findings show that students' experiences with self-selected digital media involved both opportunities and challenges in their independent English learning.

Discussion

Self-Selected Digital Media and Learner Autonomy

The findings suggest that the motivational value of self-selected digital media is closely related to students' opportunity to make choices about their learning resources. Students used different platforms, including YouTube, TikTok, Duolingo, movies, and music applications, according to their interests and learning needs. Rather than relying exclusively on teacher-assigned materials, students independently selected digital content that they considered relevant and enjoyable. This pattern is consistent with the concept of learner autonomy, in which learners take greater responsibility for aspects of their own learning.

This finding can be understood through Self-Determination Theory (SDT), particularly the need for autonomy proposed by [Deci & Ryan \(2000\)](#). Autonomy involves experiencing a sense of choice and volition in one's actions. In this study, students' ability to choose platforms and content provided opportunities for them to exercise such choice in their English learning. The finding is also consistent with [An et al. \(2023\)](#), who found that learners' self-directed use of technology for English learning was associated with autonomy, flexibility, and opportunities for independent language development.

The findings therefore suggest that the important aspect of digital media may not simply be the availability of technology itself, but students' ability to decide how and what they use for learning. This distinction is important because the present study focuses specifically on self-selected media rather than digital media assigned by teachers. Students' choices allowed them to connect English learning with their individual preferences and learning needs.

Self-Selected Media and Intrinsic Motivation

The findings also indicate that students experienced English learning as more enjoyable when they used digital media that matched their interests. Students described learning through digital media as entertaining and reported that choosing their own content made them more motivated. The themes of enjoyment, interest, curiosity, and consistency identified in the qualitative analysis further support this pattern.

From the perspective of SDT, these experiences are related to intrinsic motivation, which involves engaging in an activity because it is interesting or satisfying in itself. When students selected content related to their hobbies and interests, English learning could become less like a compulsory academic task and more like an enjoyable activity. This interpretation is consistent with [Meghesli & Ouahmiche \(2021\)](#), who found that allowing learners to select their own topics supported intrinsic motivation, engagement, and participation in English speaking activities.

However, the findings should not be interpreted as demonstrating that self-selected media automatically increase intrinsic motivation for all students. Rather, the participants perceived the experience as more enjoyable and motivating. This distinction is important because the present study describes students' experiences and perceptions rather than experimentally measuring changes in motivation.

Perceived Competence and Confidence

Another important finding concerns students' perceptions of their English competence. Participants reported perceived improvements in vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and confidence. These experiences can be interpreted through the competence component of SDT. When learners perceive that they are becoming more capable of understanding or using English, they may experience a stronger sense of competence.

The use of different digital media may provide repeated opportunities for students to encounter English outside the classroom. Watching videos, listening to music, and repeating

English expressions were among the activities described in the study. Participants consequently reported greater confidence in using English, including speaking.

Nevertheless, these findings represent perceived competence development rather than objectively measured improvement in proficiency. The study did not employ pre-tests and post-tests to establish changes in students' language proficiency. Therefore, the findings are best understood as students' perceptions of their own development and confidence. This interpretation is more appropriate for the qualitative descriptive design of the study.

Extrinsic Motivation and Personal Goals

The findings further demonstrate that students' motivation was not limited to enjoyment or personal interest. Some participants reported external goals related to future careers, academic needs, and communication with people from different countries. These goals provided additional reasons for students to continue learning English through self-selected digital media.

This finding shows that students' motivation involved both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. A student could select an enjoyable YouTube video or movie because of personal interest while simultaneously viewing English proficiency as useful for future employment or academic development. Thus, self-selected digital media provided a flexible context in which different motivational purposes could coexist.

This finding also supports the broader SDT perspective that motivation can vary in its degree and form rather than being simply "motivated" or "unmotivated." In the present study, students' engagement with English was connected not only to enjoyment but also to practical goals. This combination helps explain why students continued using digital media for English learning beyond formal classroom activities.

Learning Challenges and Students' Coping Strategies

Despite the positive experiences reported by participants, the findings also demonstrate that self-selected digital media do not eliminate difficulties in English learning. Students encountered unstable internet connections, unfamiliar vocabulary, fast speech, and distractions. These challenges demonstrate that access to digital resources alone does not guarantee an easy or successful learning experience.

At the same time, students reported adopting strategies to deal with these difficulties. They used subtitles, replayed videos, and selected content that they found enjoyable and relevant. These strategies suggest that students were not merely passive consumers of digital content; they made adjustments to their learning practices when difficulties occurred.

This finding is particularly relevant to learner autonomy because students had to make decisions about how to respond to difficulties without necessarily depending on immediate teacher assistance. The use of subtitles and repeated viewing, for example, allowed students to adjust the pace and level of support according to their own needs. Thus, the challenges identified in the study also highlight the importance of students' ability to regulate their use of digital resources.

Overall Interpretation

Taken together, the findings suggest that the role of self-selected digital media in students' English learning is closely connected to choice, enjoyment, perceived competence, and personal goals. Students were able to choose platforms and content that matched their interests, reported enjoyable learning experiences, perceived development in several English skills, and connected English learning with academic, career, and communication goals. At the same time, they encountered technological and linguistic challenges and developed practical strategies to manage them.

The findings therefore support the view that self-selected digital media can provide opportunities for more autonomous and personally meaningful English learning beyond the classroom. The contribution of the present study lies in its focus not on one particular digital platform, but on students' own selection among different forms of digital media and their

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perceptions of how these choices relate to their motivation for learning English. This focus provides a more learner-centered perspective on digital English learning at Tadulako University.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found that students used various self-selected digital media, including YouTube, TikTok, podcasts, movies, music applications, and language-learning applications, according to their interests and learning needs. Students perceived these media as supporting English learning motivation by enabling content choice, enjoyable engagement, and independent learning. They also reported perceived improvements in vocabulary, listening, speaking, pronunciation, and confidence. Motivation involved both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects: enjoyment, interest, and personal preference encouraged engagement, while academic requirements, career opportunities, and communication with people from different countries provided additional goals. However, students experienced challenges such as unstable internet connections, unfamiliar vocabulary, fast speech, and distractions. They addressed these challenges through subtitles, replaying videos, and selecting relevant content. Overall, the findings suggest that student choice and learner autonomy are important in self-directed digital English learning. The findings reflect participants' experiences rather than causal evidence. Teachers can therefore encourage appropriate self-selected digital resources while guiding students in selecting and evaluating relevant English-learning content.

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