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DIGITAL EXPOSURE TO ENGLISH AND UTILISATION OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG B.ED TRAINEES

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Abstract
The study examines the relationship between digital exposure to English and utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational design is adopted. Data are collected from 200 B.Ed trainees using a structured 5-point Likert questionnaire covering passive digital exposure, interactive digital exposure, academic/professional digital exposure, and utilisation of English skills across listening, reading, speaking, writing, and academic/classroom use. Mean scores are computed for each dimension and for overall exposure and utilisation. Data analysis is carried out using EDUSTAT through descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, group comparison between low and high exposure groups, and regression analysis. Results show a statistically significant and strong positive relationship between total digital exposure and overall English skill utilisation. Interactive digital exposure demonstrates a higher association with utilisation than passive exposure and emerges as the strongest predictor in the regression model, while academic/professional exposure also shows a significant contribution. Receptive skill utilisation is higher than productive skill utilisation, indicating scope for strengthening output-oriented practices in teacher education. The findings highlight the value of interaction-rich digital English engagement for sustained professional language use among prospective teachers.

Key Words: Digital exposure, English skill utilisation, B.Ed trainees.

INTRODUCTION

English serves as a key language of academic engagement, professional communication, and access to contemporary knowledge resources in India, including Kerala. Within teacher education, B.Ed trainees encounter English as an academic medium for reading scholarly materials, preparing lesson plans, using digital teaching resources, and participating in professional communication. Parallel to these institutional demands, daily language practices increasingly occur in digitally mediated spaces where learners encounter English through mobile applications, social media, streaming platforms, websites, and online learning environments. These spaces extend opportunities for English contact beyond formal coursework and may shape the extent to which trainees actually use English skills in meaningful academic and communication contexts (Reinders & Benson, 2017).

Digital exposure to English includes both passive and interactive forms. Passive exposure refers to consumption-oriented contact such as watching English videos, listening to audio content, and reading posts or online texts, whereas interactive exposure involves participation-oriented activities such as messaging, commenting, posting, contributing to online discussions, collaborating in shared documents, and communicating academically through digital platforms. This distinction matters because interactive engagement generally requires language production, negotiation of meaning, and attention to clarity,

which can strengthen utilisation of English skills more directly than exposure that remains primarily receptive (Long, 1996; Swain, 1985).

In this context, the study examines the relationship between digital exposure to English and the utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala. The focus is on utilisation, namely the extent to which trainees use English for listening/viewing, reading, speaking/interaction, writing, and academic/classroom activities, reflecting practical demands encountered during teacher preparation and professional readiness.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Language learning beyond the classroom highlights that substantial learning occurs through engagement with the target language in informal, self-directed, and interest-driven contexts. Contemporary perspectives view language development as embedded within broader learning ecologies where classroom instruction operates alongside out-of-class interactions, resources, and practices, including digital contexts (Benson, 2017; Reinders & Benson, 2017).

The notion of extramural English emphasizes English encountered outside institutional settings through leisure and digital activities. Regular engagement with English media and communication can increase opportunities for vocabulary growth, familiarity with authentic discourse patterns, and confidence in language use, particularly when learners participate actively rather than only consume content (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

Second language acquisition perspectives provide mechanisms linking exposure and utilisation. Input-oriented accounts emphasize the role of comprehensible input in acquisition (Krashen, 1985), interactionist accounts highlight negotiation of meaning and feedback in communicative exchange (Long, 1996), and output-oriented accounts emphasize learning that occurs when learners are pushed to produce language (Swain, 1985). Together, these perspectives suggest that interactive digital exposure may be particularly influential because it combines input, interaction, and output within authentic communication cycles.

Research in computer-assisted language learning also supports the relevance of digital contexts for skill utilisation by providing access to rich input, authentic tasks, practice opportunities, and tools that support self-regulation and learning management (Chapelle, 2001; Lai & Gu, 2011). Within teacher education, trainees increasingly work in technology-enhanced academic routines and are expected to develop competence in selecting and creating digital pedagogic resources, aligning language use with professional competence frameworks (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). On this basis, digital exposure to English is expected to relate positively to English skill utilisation among B.Ed trainees in Kerala, with stronger effects for interactive exposure.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. Does digital exposure to English show a significant relationship with utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala?

RQ2. Is interactive digital exposure to English more strongly associated with utilisation of English language skills than passive digital exposure among B.Ed trainees in Kerala? RQ3. Do B.Ed trainees with higher levels of digital exposure to English differ significantly from those with lower levels of digital exposure in their utilisation of English language skills?

RQ4. Does digital exposure to English significantly predict utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Objective 1. To examine the relationship between digital exposure to English and utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.

Objective 2. To compare the association of interactive digital exposure and passive digital exposure with utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.

Objective 3. To determine whether utilisation of English language skills differs significantly between B.Ed trainees with high and low levels of digital exposure to English in Kerala.

Objective 4. To assess the predictive effect of digital exposure to English on utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.

HYPOTHESES

H1. Digital exposure to English shows a significant positive relationship with utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.

H2. Interactive digital exposure to English shows a significantly higher association with utilisation of English language skills than passive digital exposure among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.
H3. B.Ed trainees with higher levels of digital exposure to English show significantly higher utilisation of English language skills than those with lower levels of digital exposure in Kerala.
H4. Digital exposure to English significantly predicts utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala.

METHODOLOGY

A quantitative, descriptive-correlational research design is adopted to examine the association between digital exposure to English and utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala. The design focuses on naturally occurring differences in trainees' patterns of digital English exposure and their reported utilisation of English skills across academic and communication contexts.
The population comprises B.Ed trainees enrolled in recognised teacher education colleges in Kerala. A sample of 200 B.Ed trainees is selected from teacher education colleges in Kerala using a multistage approach. In the first stage, colleges are approached to obtain representation across management types (government, aided, and self-financing). In the second stage, trainees are selected from class lists using an appropriate random or systematic procedure feasible within each institution.
Data are collected using a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert response format (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The tool contains two major sections. Digital Exposure to English is measured using three sub-scales: Passive Digital Exposure (12 items), Interactive Digital Exposure (10 items), and Academic/Professional Digital Exposure (6 items). Utilisation of English Language Skills is measured using five sub-scales: Listening and Viewing (6 items), Reading (6 items), Speaking and Interaction (7 items), Writing (7 items), and Academic/Classroom Use of English (4 items). Higher scores indicate higher exposure and higher utilisation respectively.
Data are collected from trainees after obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. Mean scores are computed as mean scores for each sub-scale. Total Digital Exposure is computed as the mean of the three exposure sub-scale means, and Overall English Skill Utilisation is computed as the mean of the five utilisation sub-scale means.
Data analysis is carried out using the statistical software EDUSTAT. The analysis includes descriptive statistics (Mean, Standard Deviation, Median, Minimum, and Maximum), Pearson correlation to examine relationships, independent samples comparison between low and high exposure groups based on the median of Total Digital Exposure, and regression analysis to test prediction and the relative contribution of exposure dimensions. Statistical significance is evaluated at the 0.05 level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis uses mean scores (range 1–5). The results are presented in tables with interpretation for each table. All analyses are performed using EDUSTAT (n = 200).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of key study variables (n = 200).

Variable	Mean	SD	Median	Min	Max
Passive digital exposure	2.995	1.003	3.000	1.000	5.000

Interactive digital exposure	2.862	1.060	2.800	1.000	5.000
Academic/professional digital exposure	3.031	0.996	3.000	1.000	5.000
Total digital exposure	2.962	0.813	2.922	1.061	4.811
Listening/viewing utilisation	3.130	1.271	3.167	1.000	5.000
Reading utilisation	3.182	1.298	3.167	1.000	5.000
Speaking/interaction utilisation	2.727	1.265	2.429	1.000	5.000
Writing utilisation	2.859	1.282	2.857	1.000	5.000
Academic/classroom English use	3.055	1.233	3.250	1.000	5.000
Overall English skill utilisation	2.990	1.108	2.995	1.000	4.971

The overall levels of total digital exposure (Mean = 2.962) and overall English skill utilisation (Mean = 2.990) are moderate. Receptive utilisation scores are higher than productive utilisation scores, with reading (Mean = 3.182) and listening/viewing (Mean = 3.130) exceeding speaking/interaction (Mean = 2.727) and writing (Mean = 2.859).

Table 2. Pearson correlations between digital exposure measures and overall English skill utilisation (n = 200).

Digital exposure measure	r with overall utilisation	p-value
Total digital exposure	0.733	<0.001
Passive digital exposure	0.470	<0.001
Interactive digital exposure	0.675	<0.001
Academic/professional digital exposure	0.604	<0.001

Total digital exposure shows a strong positive relationship with overall English skill utilisation ($r = 0.733$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Interactive digital exposure shows a higher association with overall utilisation ($r = 0.675$) than passive digital exposure ($r = 0.470$), consistent with H2.

Table 3. Multiple regression predicting overall English skill utilisation from digital exposure dimensions (n = 200).

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.089	0.197		0.453	0.651
Passive digital exposure	0.110	0.061	0.099	1.805	0.073
Interactive digital exposure	0.489	0.059	0.468	8.306	<0.001
Academic/professional digital exposure	0.387	0.060	0.348	6.404	<0.001

Model fit: $R^2 = 0.573$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.566$; $F(3,196) = 87.528$; $p < 0.001$.

The regression model is statistically significant and explains 57.3% of the variance in overall English skill utilisation. Interactive digital exposure emerges as the strongest predictor (Beta = 0.468, $p < 0.001$), followed by academic/professional exposure (Beta = 0.348, $p < 0.001$). Passive exposure shows a smaller unique effect and is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p = 0.073$). A coefficient-difference test shows that the interactive effect is significantly larger than the passive effect ($t(196) = 3.843$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2.

Table 4. Difference in overall English skill utilisation between low and high digital exposure groups (n = 200).

Group	n	Mean	SD
Low exposure (≤ median)	101	2.377	0.920
High exposure (> median)	99	3.617	0.919
Test statistic		Value	
Median of total digital exposure (cut-off)		2.922	
Welch t-test (High vs Low)		9.537	
Degrees of freedom		197.93	
p-value (two-tailed)		<0.001	
Hedges' g		1.344	

B.Ed trainees in the high digital exposure group show significantly higher overall English skill utilisation than those in the low exposure group ($t = 9.537$, $p < 0.001$). The effect size is large (Hedges' $g = 1.344$), supporting H3.

Table 5. Simple linear regression predicting overall English skill utilisation from total digital exposure (n = 200).

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p
Constant	0.029	0.202		0.144	0.886
Total digital exposure	1.000	0.066	0.733	15.176	<0.001

Model fit: $R^2 = 0.538$; $F(1,198) = 230.298$; $p < 0.001$.
Total digital exposure significantly predicts overall English skill utilisation ($B = 1.000$, $p < 0.001$) and explains 53.8% of the variance in utilisation, supporting H4.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results indicate a clear and statistically significant positive association between digital exposure to English and utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala. The strong positive relationship between total digital exposure and overall English skill utilisation suggests that trainees who report more frequent engagement with English in digital spaces also report greater use of English for academic and communication purposes. This pattern is consistent with perspectives that emphasise language learning and use across broader learning ecologies that extend beyond formal classroom contexts (Benson, 2017; Reinders & Benson, 2017).

A central finding is the stronger role of interactive digital exposure compared with passive digital exposure. Interactive exposure shows a higher association with utilisation and emerges as the strongest predictor when exposure dimensions are considered together. This supports the view that digital contexts that require language production and exchange are more closely tied to actual utilisation than contexts limited to receptive consumption. The result aligns with interaction and output perspectives, where meaningful exchange and production facilitate stronger functional language use (Long, 1996; Swain, 1985).

The group comparison further reinforces this relationship, showing that trainees with higher overall digital exposure demonstrate substantially higher utilisation than those with lower exposure. The large effect size indicates practical relevance and suggests that variation in digital English exposure corresponds to meaningful differences in trainees' everyday language use. In teacher education, this is relevant because utilisation of English supports lesson preparation, engagement with pedagogic resources, and professional communication.

Across utilisation dimensions, receptive utilisation is higher than productive utilisation, indicating greater comfort with reading and listening/viewing than with speaking and extended writing. Digital environments often provide supports such as subtitles, replay options, and immediate lookup tools that facilitate comprehension, whereas speaking and writing require greater confidence, control, and accuracy. This pattern suggests that programmes benefit from strategies that convert digital exposure into more consistent output-oriented use in academic and teaching-related tasks.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings imply that digital exposure to English functions as a meaningful resource for enhancing English language utilisation among B.Ed trainees in Kerala. Teacher education programmes can treat trainees' digital engagement as a valuable extension of language-use contexts and align academic tasks with purposeful English use in digital platforms.

Given the stronger contribution of interactive exposure, programmes and teacher educators benefit from encouraging participation-oriented English use through structured digital activities. Examples include moderated discussion prompts in learning management systems, peer-feedback tasks in English, collaborative lesson-planning using shared documents, and guided reflective writing through digital platforms. Such tasks foster regular English production and professional communication routines.

The pattern of stronger receptive than productive utilisation indicates the need for targeted supports to strengthen speaking and writing use. Low-stakes opportunities such as short micro-presentations, voice-note reflections,

discussion leadership roles, and scaffolded academic writing tasks can increase confidence and frequency of output, which is directly relevant to classroom communication and professional documentation requirements.

At the institutional level, colleges can develop supportive norms for academic digital communication in English and provide access to curated English academic and pedagogic resources. Faculty modelling of professional English communication and the design of interaction-rich tasks can reinforce trainees' transition from passive exposure to sustained utilisation.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital exposure to English is significantly and positively associated with the utilisation of English language skills among B.Ed trainees in Kerala, indicating that digitally mediated contact with English relates meaningfully to how frequently trainees use English for academic and communication purposes. Interactive digital exposure demonstrates a stronger contribution than passive exposure, highlighting the value of participation-oriented digital practices for strengthening utilisation. Receptive utilisation exceeds productive utilisation, suggesting scope for strengthening speaking and writing through structured, interaction-rich academic tasks within teacher education. Overall, the findings support integrating purposeful digital English engagement into teacher preparation to promote confident and sustained professional language use.

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