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"ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING PLATFORMS ON ESL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY"

Omonova Nargiza Baxodir qizi

Master's student at Termez University of Economics and Service

Email: omonovanargizaa24@gmail.com

scientific supervisor: **Tojiboyeva Shohistaxon Komiljonovna**

doctor of philosophy (PhD) in pedagogical sciences

Email: shoxista0472@gmail.com

ANNOTATION

The advent of online language learning platforms has revolutionized language acquisition, particularly for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. With the increasing prevalence of digital tools in education, these platforms offer flexible, interactive, and accessible means of learning. This article explores the effectiveness of online language learning platforms in improving ESL learners' language proficiency. The study assesses the impact of these platforms on learners' vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing skills, based on empirical data from learners using popular platforms such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone.

The findings reveal that while online platforms provide valuable resources and opportunities for language practice, they do not completely replace traditional classroom instruction. However, when used alongside face-to-face learning, these platforms can significantly enhance language proficiency. The research offers insights into how online platforms can be optimized to better support ESL learners and contribute to more effective language education.

Keywords: online language learning, ESL learners, language proficiency, digital platforms, education technology



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the use of online platforms for language learning has gained significant traction, particularly for ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. These platforms, powered by advanced technology and artificial intelligence, offer learners the ability to engage in language practice at their own pace, from any location. As globalization and the digital era continue to evolve, the demand for efficient and accessible language learning methods has increased. This has led to the development of various online platforms designed to aid non-native English speakers in mastering the language.

The impact of online learning platforms on ESL learners' language proficiency is a critical area of research, especially as traditional educational methods face challenges such as limited access to resources and face-to-face interaction. Unlike conventional classroom settings, online platforms provide flexibility and convenience, making language learning more accessible to a wider audience. However, questions remain about the effectiveness of these platforms in improving learners' language proficiency compared to traditional methods.

The primary goal of this study is to assess the impact of popular online language learning platforms, such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Rosetta Stone, on ESL learners' language proficiency. Specifically, the study investigates whether these platforms can enhance learners' vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing skills. Additionally, the research explores the potential of these platforms in complementing traditional language learning techniques and how they can be integrated into more holistic language education approaches.

This research is significant because it addresses the growing reliance on digital tools in education, particularly for language acquisition. By analyzing the effectiveness of online platforms for ESL learners, this study provides valuable insights into how



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these platforms can be utilized more effectively in language learning programs and offers recommendations for future research in the field.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilizes a mixed-methods approach to assess the impact of online language learning platforms on ESL learners' language proficiency. A combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the learners' experiences and the effectiveness of the platforms. The research design integrates both empirical data collection and thematic analysis, allowing for a well-rounded exploration of the research question.

The quantitative aspect of the study involves an analysis of ESL learners' language proficiency before and after using the platforms. The qualitative component examines learners' attitudes, perceptions, and feedback regarding the use of these platforms.

Participants

The participants of this study include 120 ESL learners from diverse backgrounds who have been using online language learning platforms for at least six months. These learners are divided into two groups: one group uses Duolingo, while the other group uses Babbel. Both platforms are popular and widely used for ESL learning. Additionally, a third group uses Rosetta Stone as a comparison platform. All participants are aged between 18 and 40 years old, with varying levels of English proficiency, from beginner to intermediate.

Participants were selected through convenience sampling, ensuring that they have actively used the platform for at least six months. The study includes a mix of learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as this diversity allows for a broader understanding of how these platforms perform across different groups.



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RESULTS

Language Proficiency Improvement

The first set of results comes from the pre- and post-test assessments, which aimed to measure the improvement in language proficiency among ESL learners using the online platforms. The tests were divided into four key areas: vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing. These areas were selected based on their relevance to effective communication in English and their representation of key language skills.

Vocabulary Improvement

The results of the vocabulary test showed a significant improvement in the learners' vocabulary acquisition after using the online platforms. On average, participants' scores increased by 18% from the pre-test to the post-test.

- Duolingo users showed the highest improvement in vocabulary, with an average increase of 22%.
- Babbel users demonstrated a moderate increase in vocabulary, with an average score increase of 15%.
- Rosetta Stone users had a smaller increase, averaging 12%, although still statistically significant.

This suggests that Duolingo, with its gamified learning approach, may be particularly effective for vocabulary retention compared to other platforms. Babbel and Rosetta Stone also contributed to vocabulary improvement but at a slightly lower rate, possibly due to the structured, content-heavy nature of these platforms.

Speaking Skills

The speaking test measured participants' ability to engage in basic conversations and their fluency when responding to questions. After six months of using the online platforms, 79% of participants reported improvement in their speaking abilities, as confirmed by the post-test results. The average increase in speaking test scores was 14% across all platforms.



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- Duolingo users demonstrated the most substantial improvement in speaking, with an average score increase of 18%.
- Babbel users showed a slightly lower improvement, with an average increase of 12%.
- Rosetta Stone users had the smallest increase in speaking proficiency, averaging an 8% improvement.

This data indicates that while all platforms contribute to speaking skills development, Duolingo, with its interactive speaking exercises and voice recognition features, appears to be the most effective in improving spoken English. Babbel's structured dialogues also showed effectiveness, but Rosetta Stone's approach, which is less interactive, might not have fully catered to the speaking needs of the learners.

Listening Skills

The listening test assessed participants' comprehension of spoken English, including their ability to understand conversations, dialogues, and instructions in various contexts. Results showed that the average improvement in listening skills was 20% across all platforms.

- Duolingo users showed the highest improvement in listening comprehension, with a 25% increase.
- Babbel users had an average improvement of 18% in listening skills.
- Rosetta Stone users demonstrated an increase of 15% on average.

The improvement in listening skills was generally high across all platforms, but Duolingo's interactive, audio-based exercises seemed to contribute more significantly to learners' ability to understand spoken English, likely due to its diverse listening activities and exercises.



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Writing Skills

The writing test evaluated learners' ability to compose short essays, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and task fulfillment. The results showed an average improvement of 12% in writing skills, which was the lowest among the four key areas.

- Duolingo users had the most notable improvement in writing, with an average increase of 14%.

- Babbel users showed a 10% increase in writing proficiency.

- Rosetta Stone users showed a smaller improvement, with a 7% increase.

The writing improvements were comparatively lower than vocabulary, speaking, and listening, possibly due to the nature of the exercises offered by the platforms. While Duolingo provided writing exercises in its lessons, it focused more on sentence structure and vocabulary. Babbel and Rosetta Stone provided more structured writing activities, but they were limited in terms of complex writing tasks and real-time writing practice.

CONCLUSION

The study also highlighted the need for further research in this area, particularly in understanding the long-term effects of online language learning platforms on ESL learners' proficiency. A more diverse sample size, including learners from different language backgrounds and additional platforms, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of their impact. Longitudinal studies would also offer valuable insights into the sustained effects of online learning on language acquisition.

In conclusion, online language learning platforms offer valuable tools for ESL learners, particularly in developing vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. However, their limitations in fostering writing proficiency and providing interactive engagement highlight the need for improvements. Future platform development should focus on increasing interactivity, providing real-time communication practice, and offering



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personalized learning paths to better support ESL learners in their language acquisition journey.

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