

**"EXPLORING THE ROLE OF ONLINE PLATFORMS IN ENHANCING  
ESL LEARNERS' LANGUAGE SKILLS"**

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**ABSTRACT**

The integration of online platforms into language learning has transformed the educational landscape, particularly for English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. This study explores the role of online language learning platforms in enhancing ESL learners' language skills, with a focus on vocabulary, listening, speaking, and writing proficiency. The research aims to evaluate the effectiveness of popular platforms such as Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests, surveys, and interviews with 150 ESL learners who have engaged with these platforms for at least six months.

The findings reveal significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills, especially for Duolingo users. However, the platforms showed limited impact on learners' writing proficiency. The study highlights the importance of interactive and gamified elements in boosting engagement and motivation, while also acknowledging the limitations in areas that require deeper, context-based learning. The results suggest that online platforms, when combined with traditional learning methods, can significantly support ESL learners' development.

Keywords: online platforms, ESL learners, language proficiency, digital learning, vocabulary, speaking skills

## INTRODUCTION

The rapid evolution of technology has reshaped the way language is learned and taught, particularly with the advent of online platforms. In the context of English as a Second Language (ESL), the shift towards online language learning tools has provided learners with new opportunities for self-paced study, interactive practice, and global connectivity. Online platforms, including Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise, have gained significant attention for their accessibility and flexibility in supporting language acquisition.

Online language learning platforms allow learners to access a wide range of resources at their convenience, and these platforms are often considered an attractive alternative to traditional classroom-based language instruction. However, there is ongoing debate about the actual effectiveness of these platforms in fostering language proficiency. While many learners report enjoying the convenience and engagement of these platforms, there are concerns about whether they are truly enhancing key language skills, particularly in more complex areas such as writing and deep comprehension.

This research aims to explore the role of online platforms in enhancing ESL learners' language skills. Specifically, the study examines how these platforms contribute to the development of vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing skills. It also investigates whether these platforms can supplement traditional language learning methods or if they fall short in certain areas of language acquisition.

The central question of this study is: To what extent do online language learning platforms improve the language proficiency of ESL learners? This question is essential because as ESL learners increasingly rely on digital tools to supplement or replace traditional language classes, understanding the effectiveness of these platforms becomes critical for both educators and learners.

This study's objectives are twofold:

1. To evaluate the improvement of key language skills—vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing—among ESL learners using online platforms.
2. To assess the impact of interactive, gamified features of these platforms on learner motivation, engagement, and language development.

Understanding how online platforms influence language acquisition can provide valuable insights into how educators can leverage these tools to enhance language teaching and learning. Additionally, this research aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on digital language learning by examining the practical application and limitations of online tools for ESL learners.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study follows a mixed-methods research design to assess the impact of online language learning platforms on ESL learners' language proficiency. By combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these platforms contribute to the development of key language skills, namely vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing.

The research design includes two main components:

1. Pre- and post-assessment tests to measure changes in language proficiency.
2. Surveys and semi-structured interviews to capture learners' perceptions and experiences with online platforms.

### Participants

The participants in this study consist of 150 ESL learners from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. These learners were selected based on the following criteria:

- Age range: 18 to 45 years.
- Proficiency level: Participants were selected from A1 to B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).
- Platform usage: All participants have been actively using one of the three platforms (Duolingo, Babbel, or Memrise) for a minimum of six months.

The study divided participants into three groups based on their platform of choice:

- Duolingo Group: 50 participants
- Babbel Group: 50 participants
- Memrise Group: 50 participants

These three platforms were selected due to their popularity and widespread use among ESL learners. The platforms were chosen to provide a comparative analysis of different approaches to online language learning: Duolingo for its gamified approach, Babbel for its structured lessons, and Memrise for its focus on vocabulary and real-world conversation.

## RESULTS

### Improvement in Language Proficiency

The pre- and post-assessment tests were designed to measure the improvement in four key areas of language proficiency: vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing. The results of these tests indicate significant improvements across all four areas for participants using online language learning platforms. The greatest improvement was observed in vocabulary and listening, followed by speaking, and the smallest improvement was seen in writing.

#### *1. Vocabulary Improvement*

The results from the vocabulary test demonstrated an overall improvement of 16% across all participants from the pre-test to the post-test. Learners showed the most significant gains in vocabulary acquisition after six months of using online platforms.

The Duolingo group experienced the highest improvement, with an average increase of 22% in their vocabulary scores.

- Babbel users showed an increase of 14% in vocabulary proficiency, while
- Memrise users showed the smallest improvement at 11%.

These findings suggest that Duolingo's gamified learning environment and frequent practice opportunities are particularly effective for improving vocabulary. Babbel's structured lessons also contributed positively to vocabulary acquisition, but the rate of improvement was slower. Memrise, with its focus on vocabulary repetition and real-world conversation, showed steady but less impressive results compared to Duolingo and Babbel.

## CONCLUSION

This study has examined the effectiveness of online language learning platforms in enhancing the language skills of ESL learners, focusing on Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise. The research aimed to evaluate the impact of these platforms on learners' vocabulary, speaking, listening, and writing skills, as well as their engagement and overall satisfaction with the learning process.

The results indicate that online platforms can significantly improve vocabulary and listening skills, particularly for users of Duolingo, which incorporates gamified elements and frequent interactive activities. Duolingo users demonstrated the greatest improvement in vocabulary and speaking, which aligns with existing research that highlights the effectiveness of game-based learning and short, interactive sessions in increasing learners' language proficiency. The gamification aspect of Duolingo, with features like rewards, levels, and daily streaks, kept learners motivated and engaged, which is a crucial factor for successful language learning.

However, the study also revealed limitations in the platforms' ability to develop more complex language skills, particularly writing. The writing skills improvement was less pronounced across all platforms, with Duolingo showing the highest

improvement in writing (12%), followed by Babbel (8%) and Memrise (6%). The lack of real-time interaction and personalized feedback on writing exercises is likely a contributing factor. Writing, being a more complex skill, requires immediate corrections and structured practice that online platforms, especially Duolingo and Memrise, are currently less equipped to offer compared to traditional classroom learning.

Babbel, with its structured lessons and emphasis on conversational English, showed moderate improvements in speaking and listening. However, the pace of learning and limited interactive opportunities reduced its potential for deeper engagement. In contrast, Memrise, primarily focusing on vocabulary, offered limited speaking and writing practice, which impacted its overall effectiveness for enhancing comprehensive language skills.

The study also underscores the importance of blended learning approaches. While online platforms offer convenience and flexibility, they should be integrated with traditional learning methods to fully support learners in all aspects of language development. Classroom-based instruction, where learners can engage in real-time discussions, receive feedback, and practice writing, remains essential for advancing beyond basic language skills. Online platforms, when combined with in-person teaching, can offer a more holistic learning experience, enabling learners to develop both foundational skills and advanced language proficiency.

Future research should focus on exploring the long-term effects of online language platforms on learners' proficiency, especially in more advanced areas like writing and grammar. Further studies could also investigate the impact of personalization and adaptive learning technologies on learner outcomes. Additionally, the role of peer collaboration and real-time feedback in enhancing language learning on online platforms warrants further exploration.

In conclusion, online language learning platforms like Duolingo, Babbel, and Memrise provide valuable tools for enhancing ESL learners' language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary and listening. However, to maximize their effectiveness, these platforms should be integrated into blended learning environments, alongside traditional classroom methods that can provide comprehensive feedback, complex language practice, and real-time interaction.

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