



Exploring Self-Confidence in English Skills and Informal Digital Learning Frequency: A Study of Indonesian Elementary Students

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Abstract

This research explores the self-confidence of Indonesian elementary school students in their English skills and the frequency of their engagement with Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities, both receptive and productive. A quantitative survey design was employed, involving 103 Indonesian elementary school students who completed a 5-point Likert scale instrument measuring both receptive and productive IDLE activities, as well as students' confidence in various English language tasks. The findings reveal that students engage more frequently in receptive IDLE activities—such as listening to English songs and watching subtitled English movies—than in productive ones like emailing or speaking via video calls. Despite this, overall participation in IDLE activities remains low. Furthermore, students exhibit higher self-confidence in receptive skills, particularly in understanding their teacher's spoken English, while confidence declines significantly for productive tasks such as oral presentations or discussing past experiences. These patterns highlight a preference for passive exposure to English and suggest a need for more structured opportunities to engage students in active language use. These findings provide valuable contributions and insights into English language teaching and learning in early education, highlighting the recommendation for strategies, teacher training, and parental involvement that support EFL learners and educators in diversifying methods to learn English as a foreign language, ultimately promoting greater self-confidence and digital engagement among students.

Keywords: Elementary school student; Informal digital learning of English; Self-confidence

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INTRODUCTION

The history of English language subject in elementary schools in Indonesia has a quite long process. Before the establishment of the *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan* (KTSP) in 2006, English language subjects could generally be obtained when students were at junior high school level. After the KTSP 2006 was established, the government designated English as one of the local content subjects at elementary school level (Herwiana, 2020).

However, after several years, Indonesia underwent a curriculum change and began to implement a new national-scaled curriculum called *Kurikulum 2013* or, more briefly, K13. The establishment of K13 as the national curriculum has an influence on the

implementation of English subjects in elementary schools. The English language subject for elementary schools, which originally existed in the KTSP 2006, was removed and no longer became a subject that must be taught to elementary school students. The loss of English language subjects for elementary school students has reaped pros and cons among the academics. Sepyanda (2017) believes that English as a foreign language is very important to be taught as early as possible, side-by-side with the Indonesian language learning process. Meanwhile, Herwiana (2020) stated that learning English for elementary school students still has obstacles. These obstacles occur because there is no special direction or curriculum from the government for instructors or teachers on how to teach English properly (Widhi et al., 2023). This lack of teaching direction has resulted in many English teachers not being able to provide correct English teaching techniques for elementary school or early age students (Herwiana, 2020).

Based on the statements above, it needs to be understood that English language learning can be learned through formal, non-formal and informal education. These three educational paths certainly have different concepts. According to the Indonesian National Law no. 20 in 2003 about National Education System, formal education is the education system implemented in schools, then non-formal education is a learning activity that take place in society, while informal education is obtained primarily from the family environment. Even though they are different, the three cannot be separated because students' success in forming human resource output is very dependent on the relationship of the three educational paths mentioned previously (Syaadah et al., 2023)

The informal education is one of the educational paths that has been established in Indonesia through the Law of the Republic of Indonesia no. 20 of 2003 about the National Education System. In contrast to formal education which is carried out in schools, the informal education, which is mainly carried out in the family environment, is often associated with out-of-school education (Rembangsupu et al., 2022). As mentioned from the Law of the Republic of Indonesia no. 20 of 2003 about the National Education System, formal education is a multi-leveled and structured educational path consisting primary education, secondary education, and higher education. On the other side, informal education is described as an educational path implemented from the family and surrounding environment. Informal education is an educational path that is not structured and does not have chronological levels based on knowledge and skills, but is still applied to everyday life (Lubis, 2021).

Digital learning or technology-based learning has been developing rapidly, especially after the outbreak of COVID-19 all over the globe which required almost all learning activities to be carried out online. The development of digital learning has changed the characteristics of modern era students or digital-age learners, who are no longer having to be too dependent on traditional learning institutions to gain new knowledge (Meliana et al., 2025; Karya et al., 2022). These changes in student characteristics influence the attitudes of students who become more independent in utilizing their internet skills in collecting data and information (Milakovich & Wise, 2019). Digital technology also has the potential to distribute educational content massively within a short period of time. Unfortunately, even though digital learning has been proven to have a positive impact, some gaps still can be found, especially in low-income environments (Brossard et al., 2021).

Informal Digital Learning of English or can be shortened as IDLE is an English learning practice that combines two different aspects. Lee (2022) stated that in the last ten years, contemporary teachers have widely adopted to the use of technology. Moreover, English language is relatively easy to be exposed and learned both informally and digitally by the society nowadays, especially to the young society. In the previous research, EFL

(English as Foreign Language) learners believes that the informal digital learning activity can significantly improves their skill of their target language, but only few of them was involved in an informal digital learning activity outside of the class schedule (Karya et al., 2022; Jupri et al., 2022). The dominant use of their native language inside their social circle and the limited use of digital device are the specific reasons that created this situation (Nugroho & Triana, 2021).

Informal Digital Learning of English or IDLE is divided into two definitions of context. The first context is IDLE in extramural context which means that IDLE is an English learning process that happens naturally and independently outside of the class without having to be dependent to the formal education structure. The second context is IDLE in extracurricular context, where the IDLE activities are done independently outside of the class, but still being semi-structured and related to the student's formal education activities. (Lee, 2019b).

IDLE activities can be categorized into two types of activities, which are Receptive IDLE Activities (RIA) and Productive IDLE Activities (PIA). The focus of RIA is the practice of IDLE to comprehend digital English contents, while PIA focuses on the practice to produce digital contents that use English. The frequency of all IDLE activities are positive diviners of EFL learners' willingness to communicate in English as a second language. The results of the study conducted by Nugroho, (2021) indicated that the Indonesian EFL learners are motivated to communicate in English when a range of IDLE activities are available for them to engage. To put it another way, both RIA and PIA IDLE activities are implied that they can potentially build the communication behavior of Indonesian EFL learners, who learn English as a second language and hold a homogeneous culture and society.

Self-confidence is an attitude or a feeling that sparks confidence in the ability of oneself so that the person concerned is not too anxious in his actions (Nety et al., 2020). Having self-confidence in one's English language skills is crucial for students, especially in a world where communication in English is highly valued. Developing self-confidence in English language skills is foundational for students as it empowers them to express their thoughts and ideas effectively. Self-confidence can help and lead the students to improve their participation and enjoyment in learning, help them reducing examination anxiety, increasing their interest in goal seeking, as well as growing comfort with their lecturers and classmates. It also help them in sharing their experience and opinions in the class (Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020).

However, even though self-confidence is crucial in empowering students to learn English, some students still have a lack of self-confidence which make them feel anxious when trying to practice their English in their daily life. Nety et al. (2020) proposed that the factors that caused the lack of confidence in students were anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of vocabulary.

Based on the previous research which has been briefly disclosed above, there is still a lot of research potential about the practice of informal digital learning that can be studied deeper. Previous studies have revealed that informal education and digital learning have several impacts on students' learning processes. However, research on the practice of Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) and the English skill's self-confidence of elementary school students still requires further research. Therefore, this research was conducted to find a new perspective on IDLE practice in early childhood students by exploring the answers to these research questions: "How frequent do elementary school students practice the informal digital learning of English?" and "How are the self-confidence of the elementary school students towards their English language skills?"

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study aims to explore elementary school students' English skills self-confidence and the frequency of the practice of informal digital learning of English. To achieve the goal, quantitative research was adopted, and a survey design with Likert scale of 1 to 5 were conducted to expose the frequency of the elementary school students's practice of informal digital learning of English and their self-confidence regarding their English language skills inside and outside of the class.

According to Creswell & Creswell (2023), nonexperimental or survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of a population's trends, attitudes, or opinions by studying a sample of that population. This research benefits from quantitative method as the data reduces researcher biases from measured numerical data. Moreover, the use of structured instrument is beneficial to enhance the data's consistency (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Other than that, standardized quantitative models such as structured survey improves efficiency in data collection (Saunders et. al., 2019).

However, quantitative method also has its limitation, for example, it may suffer from response bias from the participants by giving socially desirable answers (Podsakov et. al., 2016). To overcome this problem, the authors ensured the participants anonymity and explained that the survey will not have any impact to their grades.

Research Site and Participants

The population of this study was the students of MI Al-Hidayat Bunut Wetan, Pakis, Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Using census sampling, the participants consist of all 103 students from the 6th grade. All the students are native to Indonesian. According to Taherdoost (2022), census sampling is the most appropriate method to use when the target group consists of small number of participants, therefore it eliminates selection bias and provides complete data.

Instrument and Data Collection

This study used the 5-point Likert-scale to explore the students' English skill self-confidence and the frequency of students' practice of informal digital learning of English. The survey conducted was adopted from Lee & Draji, (2019) instrument that was designed to expose the frequency of the IDLE activities. For the self-confidence variable, the survey conducted was adopted from Pyun et al's (2014) affective variables instrument.

All the instruments that have been adopted then were translated to Indonesian to make it easier for the participants to comprehend all the questions in the survey. The survey questionnaire was divided into three parts, the first part contained seven questions using Likert scale from 1 to 5 to sought participants' frequency in receptive IDLE activities (RIA), while the second part contained five items to determine participants' frequency in conducting productive IDLE activities (PIA). The scale indicated 1 as "never," 2 as "rarely," 3 as "sometimes," 4 as "often," and 5 as "very often." The last part dealt with participants' English skills self-confidence and consisted of eight items using Likert scale from 1 to 5. The scale indicated 1 as "strongly disagree," 2 as "disagree," 3 as "neutral," 4 as "agree," and 5 as "strongly agree." Microsoft Excel was used to validate the instrument as well as to check the reliability of the instrument.

Before conducting the survey, the authors measured the validity and reliability of the survey instrument. To measure the validity of the instrument, Pearson Correlation validity test was conducted, and Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to measure the reliability of the research instrument. After measuring the instrument's validity and reliability, the author proceeded to conduct the survey with the selected participants. This process was conducted from 23-25 of March 2024.

Data Analysis

To understand the participants' English skills self-confidence and the frequency of the practices about informal digital learning of English, descriptive statistical analysis in the form of mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) was conducted using Microsoft Excel. Referring to Pec et. al., (2019), descriptive statistics are the fundamental concept of data analysis, which provide a clear and organized overview of datasets. This statement is in line with the purposes of this study to provide a clear snapshot on Indonesian elementary students' self-confidence in English skill, and the students' frequency in practicing the informal digital learning of English.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In order to analyze elementary school students' frequency of the RIA and PIA IDLE activities, the survey results are presented in the Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Elementary school student's receptive IDLE activities (RIA) frequency

No.	Items	M	SD
1.	"How often do you play games in English?"	2,67	1,42
2.	"How often do you listen to English news from TV or online?"	1,88	0,93
3.	"How often do you listen to English songs?"	2,87	1,43
4.	"How often do you listen to English podcasts?"	1,48	0,83
5.	"How often do you read online English comics?"	1,60	0,93
6.	"How often do you watch TV shows in English?"	1,83	0,97
7.	"How often do you watch English movies using English subtitle?"	2,06	1,31

As depicted from Table 1, the elementary school students are rarely and sometimes conducted the RIA IDLE activities, with the Item 3 "I listen to songs in English" having the highest mean score of 2,87 and standard deviation of 1,43, while the Item 4 "I listen to English podcasts" received the lowest mean score with 1,48 and standard deviation of 0,83. The data results showed that some items had the mean scores above 1,00, which indicated that the elementary school students rarely engage in some of the RIA IDLE activities (Items 2, 4, 5, 6). From Table 1, it was also revealed that some items had the mean scores above 2,00, which indicates that the elementary school students sometimes engage in some of the RIA IDLE activities (Items 1, 3, 7).

Chart 1. Elementary school student's receptive IDLE activities (RIA) frequency.

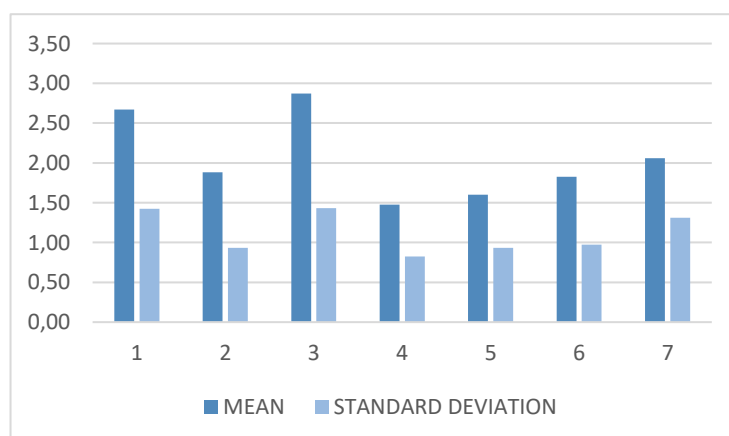
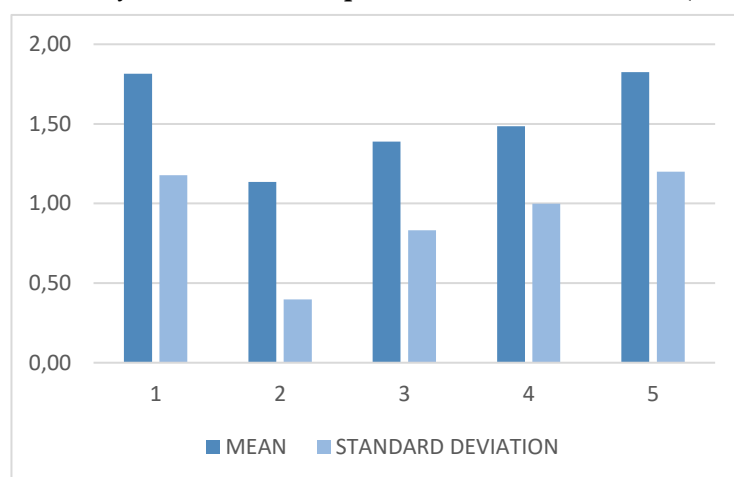


Table 2. Elementary school student's productive IDLE activities (PIA) frequency.

No.	Items	M	SD
1.	"I chat with others in English via social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, etc.)."	1,82	1,18
2.	"I do video call with others in English."	1,14	0,40
3.	"I send an email to others in English."	1,39	0,83
4.	"I share English contents online."	1,49	1,00
5.	"I use digital technology to connect with people from other countries."	1,83	1,20

From the survey results in Table 2, the elementary school students are rarely conducted the PIA IDLE activities, with the Item 5 "I use digital technology to connect with people from other countries" having the highest mean score of 1,83 and standard deviation of 1,20, while the Item 2 "I do video call with others in English" received the lowest mean score with 1,14 and standard deviation of 0,40. The data results showed that all items had the mean scores above 1,00, which indicated that the elementary school students rarely engage in the PIA IDLE activities).

Chart 2. Elementary school student's productive IDLE activities (PIA) frequency.



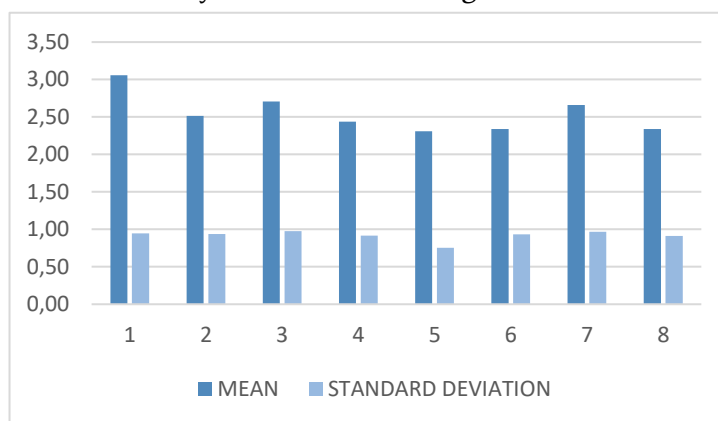
Referring to the data in Table 1 and 2, based on the highest mean score from each table, it can be concluded that elementary school students engage more frequently in receptive IDLE activities (RIA) rather than in productive IDLE activities (PIA). This statement can be proven from the total average of each table, where receptive activities scored higher in frequency ($M=2.06$) compared to productive ones ($M=1.53$). The most popular receptive activity was listening to English songs ($M=2.87$), while the least frequent was listening to podcasts ($M = 1.48$). For productive activities, chatting in English on social media had the highest engagement ($M=1.83$), whereas video calls were the rarest ($M=1.14$).

Variability in participation also differed between the two types of activities. Receptive activities showed higher inconsistency, particularly for listening to songs ($SD=1.43$) and playing games ($SD=1.42$), indicating that some students frequently engage in these tasks while others do not. In contrast, productive activities had lower overall variability, except for social media use ($SD=1.18$) and connecting with people abroad ($SD=1.20$), which had wider participation gaps. Video calls, the least common productive activity, were the most consistent ($SD=0.40$), likely because few students attempted them at all.

Table 3. Elementary school student's English skill's self-confidence

No.	Items	M	SD
1.	"I am confident I can understand most of what my teacher says in English class."	3,06	0,95
2.	"I am confident I can use English vocabulary and expressions that I learned to interact with my teacher or friends."	2,51	0,94
3.	"I am confident I can ask and answer various questions in English."	2,71	0,98
4.	"I am confident I can talk about myself in English using sentences."	2,44	0,91
5.	"I am confident I can talk about what I did last weekend using English sentences."	2,31	0,75
6.	"I am confident I can do well in oral presentation in English."	2,34	0,93
7.	"I am confident I can order a meal in English at a restaurant."	2,66	0,97
8.	"I am confident I can ask for and give directions for location in English."	2,34	0,91

Chart 3. Elementary school student's English skill's self-confidence



The results in Table 3 about student's English skill self-confidence revealed that elementary school students disagreed to most of the item statements, while they agreed to the item statement 1, "I am confident I can understand most of what my teacher says in English class" by having the highest mean score of 3,06 and standard deviation of 0,95, while the Item 5 "I am confident I can talk about what I did last weekend using English sentences" received the lowest mean score with 2,31 and standard deviation of 0,75. The data results showed that most items had the mean scores below 3,00, which indicated that the elementary school students disagreed to the item statements from item 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8. On the other hand, the elementary students agreed to item statement 1, which showed the mean score above 3,00.

Discussion

The aim of this study is to explore elementary school student's frequency in engaging with IDLE activities, both the receptive and productive activities. This study also explored elementary school student's self-confidence in their English skill. From the result of the data analysis, students engaged more in receptive IDLE activities rather than productive IDLE activities. The data also presented that elementary school students have low confidence in their English skill.

Compared to productive IDLE activities (PIA), such as chatting on social media, sending emails, or making video calls in English, elementary school students are more likely to participate in receptive IDLE activities (RIA), such as playing games in English, watching movies with subtitles, and listening to English songs. Receptive behaviors were

more frequent ($M=2.06$) than productive ones ($M=1.53$) on average. Listening to English songs was the most popular receptive activity ($M = 2.87$), whilst podcast listening was the least popular ($M=1.48$). Video conversations were the least common ($M=1.14$), while English-language social media chats had the highest involvement for productive activities ($M=1.83$).

This implies that rather than engaging in activities that demand active informal digital English language production, the students would rather be exposed to English language passively and through receptive IDLE activities. This statement is in line with a study conducted by Nugroho et al., (2022), which stated that both productive and receptive IDLE activities held some contribution to the enhancement of learners' communicative competence, with receptive IDLE activities being more frequently engaged by learners. Moreover Receptive IDLE activities, like viewing movies and listening to English songs, were frequently used to help students expand their English vocabulary (Rezai et al., 2024; Hidayatullah & Haerazi, 2022). However, even though the findings of this study showed that the elementary school students engaged more in receptive IDLE activities than productive IDLE activities, most of the students were still rarely engaged in both type of the IDLE activities.

Lee & Lee, (2019) suggested that integrating IDLE activities into the classroom could enhance students' language proficiency and engagement while bridging the gap between formal and informal learning. Moreover, since self-efficacy and motivation are important indicators of language use, focusing on these emotional factors can boost students' engagement in fruitful IDLE activities (Lee & Drajati, 2019). Another suggestion from Zhang & Liu, (2022) is that promoting language practice on social networking sites can offer real-world settings for productive IDLE practices. This statement is in line with a study conducted by Anggraini et al., (2022) which stated that the most common IDLE activities among Indonesian EFL students, according to this study, were playing online games, viewing YouTube videos, and utilizing social media, which also resulted in positive responses from the students with the use of ICT in their IDLE activities.

The two categories of activities also varied in terms of participation variability. Higher inconsistency was found in receptive activities, especially when it came to playing games ($SD=1.42$) and listening to music ($SD=1.43$), suggesting that some students often participate in these activities while others do not. However, with the exception of social media use ($SD=1.18$) and communicating with persons overseas ($SD=1.20$), which exhibited larger participation gaps, productive activities showed reduced overall variability. Video calls, the least common productive activity, were the most consistent ($SD=0.40$), likely because few students attempted them at all. The result of participation variability in this study is similar to a study conducted by Wu, (2023) which stated that IDLE activities positively impacted the engagement of the students in online classes, though the degree of students' engagement in IDLE activities varied, highlighting differences in participation levels.

Even though the answer to the research question about the frequency of the practice of IDLE activities among elementary school students has been disclosed, Lee, (2019a) found that quantity of IDLE was not related to students' English vocabulary scores. It revealed that the quality of IDLE was significantly, positively associated with the English vocabulary outcomes. Referring to this previous study, the frequency of the IDLE activities' engagement among the elementary school students still needs to be explored deeper, especially the quality of the IDLE activities.

Based on the findings, the data revealed that patterns in elementary students' self-confidence across various English language skills. Students demonstrate the highest confidence level ($M=3.06$) in understanding their teacher's English during class, indicating

greater comfort with receptive language skills compared to productive ones. This aligns with previous findings showing students' preference for passive learning activities. Confidence levels progressively decline for more productive language use, with speaking tasks showing the lowest scores, particularly when describing past events ($M=2.31$) and giving oral presentations ($M=2.34$).

Depending on the complexity and nature of the task, a distinct hierarchy of confidence was displayed. More advanced productive IDLE activities involving lengthy speech or personal narration score significantly lower than basic interactive abilities like ordering meals ($M=2.66$) and asking and answering questions ($M=2.71$). This pattern implies that students feel more comfortable using language in predictable, everyday ways than generating original contents or narratives.

According to Nety et al. (2020) and Wardasari et al., (2024), the factors that caused the lack of confidence in students were anxiety, shyness, fear of making mistakes, and lack of vocabulary. In the other side, Pangestu & Martriwati, (2024) proposed that optimistic attitude and sufficient skill could influence students' self-confidence in English speaking. In addition, Fitrah et al., (2024) emphasized the significance of self-confidence concerns in EFL instruction and proposes that creating a positive learning atmosphere could improve students' speaking abilities and general language competency.

Wardasari et al. (2024) proposed several potential solutions to address students' lack of confidence in their English skills, including lowering classroom anxiety, increasing vocabulary, and fostering group discussions. Kusumaningrum et al., (2019) provides evidence that both in-class and small group peer feedback provision led to the students' better performance. In another study conducted by Arianto et al., (2023), differentiated instruction can also be one of the solutions to increase students' confidence in productive English language activities, especially in speaking English. Cao et al., (2024) proclaimed that World Englishes teaching practice contributed significantly in improving students' self-confidence in English speaking, hence, it could be used as one of the alternatives for teachers or instructors to boost student's self-confidence in their English skill.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated Indonesian elementary students' self-confidence in English skills and their frequency of engagement with Informal Digital Learning of English (IDLE) activities. The results revealed that students were more inclined to engage in receptive IDLE activities, such as listening to English songs or watching subtitled English content, than in productive ones, like chatting or video calling in English. Despite this preference, the overall frequency of participation in both types of IDLE activities remained low. In terms of self-confidence, students demonstrated the highest confidence in understanding their teacher during English class, reflecting a stronger comfort with receptive language skills. Conversely, confidence in productive tasks, particularly speaking activities such as describing past events or giving oral presentations, was noticeably lower. These findings underline the importance of fostering both digital engagement and self-assurance in productive language use for young learners.

By emphasizing the precise information regarding the young learners' self-confidence in English skill and the frequency of IDLE activities, this study adds to the expanding corpus of research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition. It draws emphasis to the psychological aspects, including confidence, and learning practices that influence how students interact with digital English contents. This study provides new pedagogical insights into the role of IDLE in early-stage language development by concentrating on elementary-level students in an understudied context. This helps

educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers identify areas that need targeted support, like speaking confidence and productive IDLE interaction.

Apart from the results and the contribution of this study, there are several limitations acknowledged from this research. First, this study was conducted in an Indonesian elementary school with different kind of life background for each student. Students from other countries with different social and cultural background might indicate different findings in the result of the similar studies. Therefore, the authors suggest conducting a further and deeper analysis in the future research of the similar topic and involve more heterogeneous participants with diverse social and cultural background. Another key limitation is that while the study measured the frequency of IDLE activities, it did not explore the quality, depth, or duration of engagement, which could significantly influence language development and learner confidence. Therefore, the authors suggest that future studies should involve participants from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and examine not only the frequency but also the quality and impact of IDLE activities. Longitudinal research could also explore how IDLE engagement affects long-term language competence and learner confidence.

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