Bridging the Digital Divide: A Study on the Impact of App-Based English Language Learning among the Rural Learners in Kerala, India

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Abstract

This research investigates the underexplored role of app-based language learning tools in rural educational settings in Kerala, India. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study integrates quantitative data from a comprehensive questionnaire, distributed to hundreds of students across multiple rural colleges, with qualitative insights to explore the learner experiences. The questionnaire piloted, validated and examined the influence of gamification, AI-driven personalisation, and blended learning on language acquisition and student motivation. The findings indicate that gamified features, such as rewards and progress tracking, significantly boost learner engagement, while AI-powered personalisation adapts to individual proficiency levels and learning preferences. Blended learning, which combines app-based learning with traditional classroom instruction, proves effective in enhancing language skills and fostering self-directed learning. However, challenges such as disparities in digital literacy, limited infrastructure, and cultural barriers underscore the necessity for tailored strategies to maximise the potential of these technologies. By amalgamation of the empirical data with a theoretical foundation, this study offers insight into the incorporation of digital tools in rural education. The results provide practical recommendations for educators, policymakers, and developers, advocating for innovative pedagogical approaches to ensure equitable access to quality education. This work not only enriches the discourse on digital education but also lays the groundwork for future research on app-based learning in comparable contexts.

Keywords: blended education; digital literacy; educational equity; gamification; personalised learning