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## Informal Digital Learning of English: Research to Practice (Book Review)

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Ju Seong Lee

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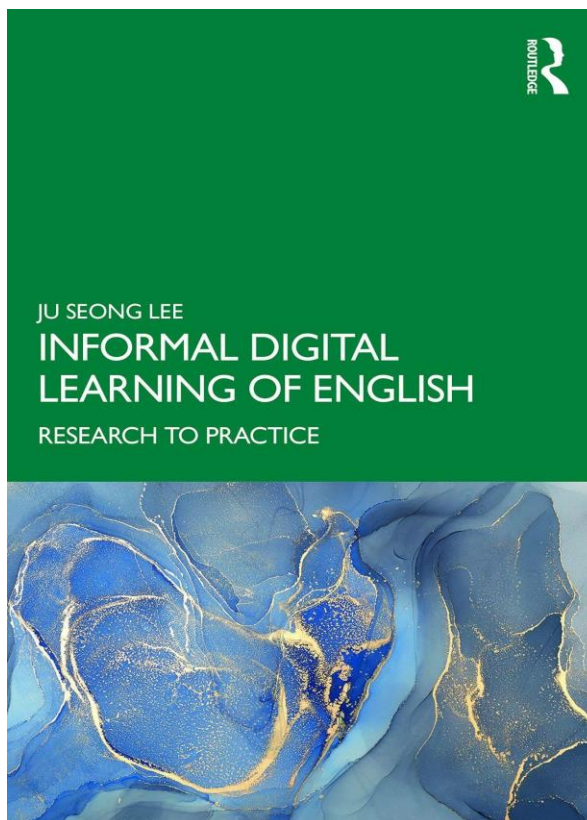
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### Book Review

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## Introduction

Recently the young generation is using English outside the classroom thanks to technology. They encounter the target language many times via films, TV series, videos and social media. Thus they have the opportunity to practice English by using the language as a tool. Now that the target language is used as a tool, they are voluntarily involved in the activities that indirectly teach them English. For instance, learners play games online and talk to the other players who are mostly foreigners. In fact, the purpose of the activity might be socializing, however, they learn the language by talking in English which is the world's lingua franca.

The meaning of IDLE is 'Informal Digital Learning of English'. In this book, IDLE is explained as "self-directed English activities in informal settings, motivated by personal interests and undertaken independently without being assessed by a teacher". Considering the fact that in today's digital era there are many people who are voluntarily and autonomously engaged in learning and speaking English via extramural or informal digital environments, IDLE plays an important role. Furthermore, Covid19 has changed the relationship between technology and people. Taking into account that everybody is more familiar with technology and digital tools than in the past, IDLE may seem appropriate in order to decrease the level of intervention and supervision.

The book *Informal Digital Learning of English: Research to Practice* consists of 8 chapters in total including an introductory chapter. It aims to explain IDLE, present experimental data on the relationship between IDLE and language learning outcomes, and provide pedagogical suggestions for English teachers.

## Chapters

Chapter 1, "**Introduction**", presents the motivation, chapter outlines, and goals of the book. The book states that during Ju Seong Lee's trip from South Korea to Morocco as an English teacher, it has been observed that Moroccan students were very successful in oral communication in English. On the other hand, Korean students had difficulty in speaking English in spite of the similarities in the EFL contexts, English language policies, and colonial histories. According to preliminary data (Dressman, Lee, & Sabaoui, 2016), it has been suggested that Moroccan students were autonomously engaged in informal digital language learning in contrast to Korean students who are dependent on intramural activities in language learning. This has been stated as the motivation that led Ju Seong Lee to conduct IDLE (Informal Digital Learning of English) research among L2 learners who are from Korea, Indonesia, Taiwan and Sweden. The goal of the book is to explain IDLE which is an emerging phenomenon, present experimental data on the relationship between IDLE and language learning outcomes, and provide pedagogical suggestions for English teachers.

Chapter 2, "**Trends in Computer Assisted Language Learning**", presents how the technology has been used from the 1970s to the present in language learning and teaching. These are respectively stated as mainframe, personal computers, multimedia and internet, and mobile and wearable devices. Moreover, 3

CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) perspectives are indicated as in-class CALL which technology is integrated as supplementary in the language classroom, extracurricular CALL which tasks assigned by teachers are done by students using technology outside the classroom, and extramural CALL which the students autonomously learn the language through technology independent from the formal program.

Chapter 3, “**Situating IDLE Within CALL**”, defines IDLE and situates it within the CALL context. IDLE is defined as the English activities, motivation of which is provided by the learners’ interests in an informal digital environment autonomously, without supervision or teacher intervention. The dimensions of IDLE are explained as formality, location, pedagogy, and locus of control. Furthermore, the book suggests that IDLE can be placed within the CALL context. IDLE seems similar to extramural CALL because of the fact that English language learning activities involve today’s young learners in digital environments outside the classroom thanks to the advances in technology and technology affordance.

Chapter 4, “**IDLE-related Concepts**”, provides an overview of IDLE-related concepts and an introduction to LBC (Language Learning and Teaching Beyond the Classroom). In addition, 2 categories that LBC can be classified into are explained as LBC offline and online which include ‘Informal Learning, Informal Second Language Learning, Fully Autonomous Self-instructed Learners, Recreational Language Learning and Extramural English’, and LBC online which includes ‘CALL in Digital Wilds, Naturalistic CALL, Out-of-class Autonomous Language Learning with Technology, Online Informal Language Learning, Online Informal Learning of English, and IDLE’.

Chapter 5, “**IDLE and Language Learning Outcomes**”, analyzes the pedagogical benefits of IDLE-related activities and presents a systematic review of them. Affective outcomes which are anxiety, enjoyment, motivation, willingness, grit, and confidence are analyzed. Furthermore, linguistic and cognitive benefits which include speaking, vocabulary, grammar, formal English grades, scores in standardized English tests, and perception of EIL (English as an International Language) are analyzed.

Chapter 6, “**IDLE in the Classroom**”, mentions how IDLE can be integrated into the classroom environment in three stages which are in-class CALL, extracurricular CALL, and extramural CALL. In the first stage, which is in-class CALL, technology can play a role in lesson plans as a supplementary element. In the second stage, which is extracurricular CALL, students can be involved in extracurricular activities in order to complete the given tasks by using digital tools. In the last stage, which is extramural CALL, students can be helped to create an IDLE environment without intervention and supervision so that they can constantly learn English autonomously and use it in many contexts. Moreover, affective support for IDLE can be summarized as showing interest in IDLE activities of the learners, recognizing IDLE activities of the learners, and encouraging them for IDLE activities.

Chapter 7, “**Preparing Teachers for Integrating IDLE Into the Classroom**”, refers to the contents of one day (6 hours) and one week (30 hours) of Intensive Workshops in detail. In addition, the chapter

includes the feedback of the teachers who participated in the workshops. It was also discussed that there were limitations to the implementation of IDLE. Four limitations were society, school, classroom, and teacher factors. It has been found that the teachers find it difficult to integrate IDLE into the classroom because of the school curriculum and lack of training and support for this topic.

Chapter 8, “**Conclusion**”, discusses the challenges for English teachers in the 21st century by presenting three scenarios (Godwin-Jones, 2019) which are language learning may no longer be needed in the future, students may learn new languages through digital tools, and students may still need an instructor to learn a new language even if there are many resources of digital materials. Nevertheless, the last scenario is believed to be the most probable one according to Godwin-Jones. Moreover, Godwin-Jones suggests that teachers need to keep pace with the new developments and adjust themselves to the new contexts where technology and language education are intertwined in the future. The chapter ends after discussing seven directions for future research and practices related to IDLE.

## **Evaluation**

This book presents IDLE which is an emerging phenomenon in many contexts and demonstrates the relationship between IDLE and the other concepts. It seeks to provide suggestions for English teachers. Furthermore, it analyzes the relation between IDLE and language learning outcomes. The book shows that IDLE becomes very important in today’s era considering the fact that technology and digital tools are inevitable elements in most people’s lives. Thus learning a language may easily happen outside the classroom as well. The fact that IDLE reduces the negative effects of in-class learning and increases positive effects which facilitate learning English also by lowering the affective filter should gain more importance among English teachers in order them to engage their students in more IDLE activities.

It is stated in the book that it was difficult to find fitting literature that combines research and practice on the IDLE topic. Thus the author of the book intended to fulfil the urgent necessity by providing a practical book for language teachers. The book keeps language teachers updated about this emerging phenomenon and gives us an insight into IDLE. In conclusion, this book is very essential for both language teachers and learners considering the relationship between the requirements of today’s digital era and language learning.

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