

Revoicing the Screen: Film Dialogue Reenactment as Informal Language Practice in Digital ELT Contexts

Shenbaga Nachiyar C.^{1*} & Dr. A. Anitha²

¹PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, India

²Professor and Head, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, India

Corresponding Author: *Shenbaga Nachiyar C. (PhD Research Scholar, Department of English, Dr. M.G.R. Educational and Research Institute, India)*

Received: 16/03/2026

Accepted: 17/04/2026

Published: 28/04/2026

Abstract: This study examines the role of social media-based film dialogue performances in supporting informal English language development among adult ESL learners. Drawing on frameworks of informal language learning, participatory digital culture, and performance-based language acquisition, the study adopts a conceptual-analytical approach to explore how learners engage with authentic input through digitally mediated practices. The analysis identifies three key patterns of engagement: imitation of linguistic forms, development of expressive speech, and heightened awareness of pronunciation. These practices emerge as learners recreate film dialogues on social media platforms, transforming passive exposure into active language use. The findings indicate that such performances function as informal yet meaningful opportunities for spoken language practice, extending beyond classroom boundaries. Additionally, the analysis highlights the role of digital environments in fostering learner motivation, creativity, and audience-oriented communication. These results suggest that integrating performance-based digital practices into English Language Teaching (ELT) may strengthen the connection between formal instruction and informal language use.

Keywords: *Informal language learning, social media, film dialogue, performance-based learning, ESL, digital participation.*

Cite this article: Shenbaga, N. C. & Anitha, A. (2026). Revoicing the Screen: Film Dialogue Reenactment as Informal Language Practice in Digital ELT Contexts. *MRS Journal of Arts, Humanities and Literature*, 3,45-48.

Introduction

The expansion of digital media has significantly reshaped how individuals engage with language in everyday contexts. Language learning is no longer confined to formal classroom environments; instead, learners increasingly interact with English through audiovisual media, online platforms, and social media participation. These environments extend language use beyond passive consumption to include performance, adaptation, and sharing, positioning digital spaces as active sites of informal language engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2008).

Among Generation Z learners, social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok play a central role in daily communication. These platforms enable users to create, remix, and share short-form video content, often involving the reenactment of film dialogues. In such performances, users reproduce verbal expressions, gestures, and emotional cues associated with cinematic narratives, and subsequently share these performances with an audience that actively responds through comments, likes, and further content creation. These practices reflect a form of participatory engagement in which language use is embedded within creative and social interaction.

In English Language Teaching (ELT), films have long been recognized as valuable pedagogical resources due to their ability to provide authentic spoken language in meaningful contexts (Sherman, 2003; Stempleski & Tomalin, 2001). Film dialogues

expose learners to natural conversational patterns, pronunciation features, and culturally situated expressions, thereby supporting the development of listening and speaking skills. Traditionally, however, such materials have been employed within teacher-directed classroom activities.

The rise of digital media has expanded the contexts in which learners encounter and reproduce cinematic language. Learners now engage with film dialogues not only through instructional settings but also through independent digital practices, particularly via social media performances. Despite the increasing visibility of such practices, limited research has examined how learners reinterpret and reproduce film language in digitally mediated environments or how these practices relate to informal language development beyond formal education.

This gap highlights the need to explore the relationship between digital participation and language acquisition. Reenactment of film dialogues on platforms such as Instagram Reels involves repeated exposure to linguistic input, imitation of pronunciation patterns, and the production of expressive speech for an audience. These processes parallel key elements of classroom speaking activities, including repetition, imitation, and communicative expression, even though they are primarily motivated by entertainment rather than formal instruction.

To address this gap, the present study investigates whether film dialogue reenactment on social media functions as a form of informal participation in English language development. Drawing on perspectives from informal language learning, participatory digital culture, and performance-based communication, the study examines how digitally mediated performance transforms cinematic input into opportunities for active language use beyond traditional classroom contexts.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a conceptual-analytical design to examine the role of film dialogue reenactment on social media as a form of informal language engagement. Rather than relying on primary empirical data, the study synthesizes theoretical perspectives and observed digital practices to interpret how learners interact with English in digitally mediated environments. This approach enables an exploration of language learning processes emerging from everyday digital participation beyond formal instructional settings.

Analytical Framework

The analysis is guided by three interrelated theoretical perspectives: informal language learning, participatory digital culture, and performance-based language learning.

Informal language learning conceptualizes language development as occurring beyond structured educational contexts through interaction with media, culture, and technology. Learners engage with language in self-directed ways, often without explicit instructional intent, yet develop linguistic competence through repeated exposure and use.

Participatory digital culture positions learners as active producers of content rather than passive consumers. Through social media platforms, users reinterpret and reproduce cultural materials, including film dialogues, by creating and sharing their own performances. This participatory engagement transforms media consumption into interactive language use.

Performance-based language learning views language as embodied and expressive, emphasizing the role of voice, gesture, and emotional context in communication. From this perspective, reenacting film dialogues constitutes a form of performative practice in which learners engage with language as social action rather than as isolated linguistic structures.

Data Context

The analysis focuses on common digital practices observed on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, where users recreate and share short video performances of film dialogues. These practices involve the imitation of verbal expressions, reproduction of gestures and emotional cues, and adaptation of cinematic narratives for digital audiences.

Such performances are treated as instances of naturally occurring language use in informal digital environments. Although primarily motivated by entertainment and social interaction, they provide opportunities for repeated exposure to authentic input and active language production.

Analytical Procedure

The study employs a qualitative analytical approach to identify recurring patterns of language engagement within film dialogue reenactment practices. The analysis focuses on how learners interact with linguistic input and transform it into performative output within digital contexts.

Through iterative examination of these practices, three key dimensions of language engagement are identified: imitation of linguistic forms, development of expressive speech, and awareness of pronunciation and prosody. These dimensions are interpreted in relation to the theoretical framework to explain how digital reenactment functions as a form of informal speaking practice.

Results

The analysis identified three primary patterns through which film dialogue reenactment on social media supports informal language engagement: imitation of linguistic forms, development of expressive speech, and increased awareness of pronunciation and prosody. These patterns emerge as learners engage with authentic audiovisual input and transform it into performative output within participatory digital environments.

Imitation of Linguistic Forms

The analysis indicates that film dialogue reenactment facilitates repeated exposure to authentic spoken language embedded within narrative contexts. Unlike decontextualized textbook examples, film dialogues present language through characters, emotions, and social relationships, allowing learners to engage with conversational structures in meaningful and situated ways (Sherman, 2003; Stempleski & Tomalin, 2001).

When learners recreate these dialogues, they reproduce lexical items, syntactic patterns, and discourse structures through imitation. This process extends beyond mechanical repetition, as learners attempt to approximate the original delivery, including timing, rhythm, and interactional flow. Such repeated imitation aligns with previous research highlighting the role of imitation and language play in developing phonological awareness and spoken competence (Cook, 2000).

Development of Expressive Speech

The findings further reveal that reenactment promotes the development of expressive and performative speech. Learners do not merely reproduce verbal content; they also incorporate gestures, facial expressions, and emotional cues associated with the original cinematic performance.

This multimodal engagement reflects the view of language as embodied communication, where meaning is constructed through the integration of voice, movement, and affect (Kao & O'Neill, 1998). In addition, the presence of an audience in social media environments encourages learners to refine their performances, contributing to increased fluency, confidence, and communicative effectiveness. As a result, language use becomes an expressive and socially situated practice rather than a purely structural exercise.

Pronunciation and Prosodic Awareness

Another key pattern concerns the development of pronunciation and prosodic awareness. The analysis shows that learners repeatedly engage with source dialogues in order to reproduce pronunciation, intonation, and rhythm with greater

accuracy. This iterative engagement draws attention to phonological features that are often difficult to acquire through traditional instruction alone.

Through reenactment, learners interact with the acoustic and rhythmic properties of spoken language, refining their ability to approximate natural speech patterns. This finding supports previous research suggesting that repeated exposure to authentic input enhances sensitivity to prosodic features and spoken discourse (Cook, 2000).

Creative Adaptation and Identity Expression

In addition to imitation, the analysis reveals that learners actively reinterpret film dialogues through creative adaptation. Social media performances rarely replicate scenes verbatim; instead, learners modify dialogues by incorporating humor, exaggeration, or personal context.

This pattern reflects the participatory nature of digital culture, where users engage with cultural texts by producing and sharing their own interpretations (Jenkins, 2006). Through this process, learners use language as a medium of self-expression, moving beyond reproduction to create personalized and contextually meaningful performances.

Digital Reenactment as Informal Speaking Practice

Taken together, these patterns demonstrate that film dialogue reenactment transforms passive media consumption into active language production. Although such practices are primarily motivated by entertainment, they involve processes central to language acquisition, including repetition, imitation, and communicative performance (Benson, 2011; Sockett, 2014).

The findings therefore indicate that social media-based reenactment functions as a form of informal speaking practice, extending opportunities for meaningful language use beyond traditional classroom settings.

Discussion

The findings of the present study indicate that film dialogue reenactment on social media functions as a meaningful form of informal language engagement. The identified patterns imitation of linguistic forms, development of expressive speech, and increased awareness of pronunciation and prosody suggest that learners actively transform cinematic input into performative language use within digital environments. These results align with perspectives on informal language learning, which emphasize that language development can occur through self-directed interaction with media and technology beyond formal instructional settings (Benson, 2011; Sockett, 2014).

The prominence of imitation as a central process supports existing research highlighting the role of repetition and language play in spoken language development. Learners' attempts to reproduce film dialogues, including timing, intonation, and interactional flow, reflect engagement with authentic discourse features rather than isolated linguistic forms. This finding is consistent with Cook's (2000) argument that imitation contributes to phonological awareness and communicative competence. At the same time, the current analysis extends this perspective by situating imitation within participatory digital environments, where repeated exposure is combined with performance and audience interaction.

The findings related to expressive speech further reinforce the relevance of performance-based approaches to language learning. Learners' integration of gesture, emotion, and voice suggests that language is experienced as embodied and socially situated communication, consistent with Kao and O'Neill's (1998) work on drama-based pedagogy. However, unlike classroom-based performance activities, social media reenactment occurs in digitally mediated spaces where learners engage with real audiences. This shift suggests that digital platforms may extend performance-based learning beyond institutional settings, enabling more sustained and self-directed engagement.

From the perspective of participatory digital culture, the findings illustrate how learners move from consumption to production of cultural content. As noted by Jenkins (2006), digital users actively reinterpret and circulate media texts rather than passively consuming them. The creative adaptations observed in film dialogue reenactment such as humor, contextual modification, and personal reinterpretation demonstrate how learners use language as a resource for identity expression. This highlights the role of digital participation in shaping contemporary language practices.

The results also extend existing literature on the pedagogical use of films in English Language Teaching. Previous studies have primarily focused on teacher-directed uses of audiovisual materials to support listening and speaking development (Sherman, 2003; Stempleski & Tomalin, 2001). In contrast, the present study foregrounds learner-driven engagement with film dialogue outside formal classroom contexts. This suggests that language learning is increasingly distributed across formal and informal domains, with digital practices playing a central role in bridging these environments.

Importantly, the findings indicate that these informal practices, although motivated by entertainment, involve processes central to language acquisition, including repetition, imitation, and communicative performance. This supports the argument that informal digital environments should be recognized as legitimate sites of language learning rather than peripheral or incidental spaces.

Taken together, these findings offer several pedagogical implications. First, they suggest that incorporating performance-based and media-oriented activities into ELT may enhance learner engagement and provide opportunities for authentic language use. Second, they highlight the importance of aligning classroom practices with learners' existing digital experiences, thereby reducing the gap between formal instruction and everyday language use. Finally, they point to the potential value of recognizing learner-generated content as a resource for language development.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations should be considered when interpreting these findings. First, the study adopts a conceptual-analytical design rather than an empirical approach, which limits the ability to make causal claims about language development outcomes. While the analysis provides theoretical insight into emerging digital practices, future research should incorporate empirical data to validate these findings across diverse learner populations.

Second, the study focuses primarily on commonly observed practices among Generation Z learners, which may limit its

applicability to other age groups or learning contexts. Digital engagement and participation patterns may vary significantly across different learner demographics.

Third, the analysis does not account for potential variability in the quality or frequency of learners' engagement with film dialogue reenactment. Factors such as proficiency level, motivation, and access to digital resources may influence the extent to which such practices support language development.

Future research should therefore adopt mixed-methods or longitudinal designs to examine how digital reenactment practices influence language learning over time. Investigating learner performance, interaction patterns, and retention outcomes across different contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical potential of these practices. Additionally, exploring how such informal activities can be systematically integrated into classroom instruction remains an important area for further study.

Conclusion

This study examined film dialogue reenactment on social media as a form of informal language engagement in English Language Teaching contexts. Drawing on perspectives from informal language learning, participatory digital culture, and performance-based communication, the analysis demonstrated how learners transform cinematic input into active language use through digitally mediated performance.

The findings identified three key dimensions of this engagement: imitation of linguistic forms, development of expressive speech, and increased awareness of pronunciation and prosody. These processes indicate that learners move beyond passive exposure to engage in meaningful language production, reflecting mechanisms central to spoken language development.

Importantly, although such practices are primarily driven by entertainment and social interaction, they involve forms of repetition, performance, and communicative expression that align closely with established principles of language acquisition. This suggests that informal digital environments function as legitimate and productive spaces for language learning, extending opportunities for engagement beyond traditional classroom settings.

From a pedagogical perspective, the study highlights the value of recognizing and integrating learners' digital practices into

English Language Teaching. Incorporating performance-oriented and media-based activities may help bridge the gap between formal instruction and learners' everyday language use, fostering more contextually grounded and engaging learning experiences.

Future research should examine these practices empirically across diverse learner populations and digital contexts, as well as explore their long-term impact on communicative competence and language retention.

References

1. Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
2. Cook, G. (2000). *Language play, language learning*. Oxford University Press.
3. Godwin-Jones, R. (2008). Emerging technologies: Social media and language learning. *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(2), 9–13.
4. Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York University Press.
5. Kao, S.-M., & O'Neill, C. (1998). *Words into worlds: Learning a second language through process drama*. Ablex Publishing.
6. King, J. (2002). Using DVD feature films in the EFL classroom. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 15(5), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1076/call.15.5.509.13468>
7. Reinhardt, J. (2019). *Social media in second language teaching and learning*. Routledge.
8. Sherman, J. (2003). *Using authentic video in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
9. Makhijani, Simran, Dugaje, Manohar. Enhancing Student Learning Outcomes: Evaluating Effective Educational Strategies for Academic Success. *CUESTIONES DE FISIOTERAPIA*. Volume 54, Issue 3, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.48047/xvqrj747>
10. Sockett, G. (2014). *The online informal learning of English*. Palgrave Macmillan.
11. Stempleski, S., & Tomalin, B. (2001). *Film*. Oxford University Press.
12. Thorne, S. L. (2013). Digital literacies. In C. A. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopedia of applied linguistics*. Wiley-Blackwell.