

# The Effects Of 'Digital Detox' Periods on Language Retention and Motivation

Mavlanova Feruzakhon Zafarjanovna

Tashkent Institute of Chemical Technology, Assistant teacher at Department of Languages, Uzbekistan

**Received:** 22 April 2025; **Accepted:** 18 May 2025; **Published:** 20 June 2025

**Abstract:** This article examines the effects of periods of temporary withdrawal from digital technologies — “digital detox” — on language retention and learner motivation in learning a foreign language. The study was conducted using experimental and observational methods and compared the results of a group with reduced use of smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices during language learning with a group that was constantly in a digital environment. The results show that short-term digital detox periods can positively change language material retention indicators, as well as increase intrinsic motivation for language learning. At the same time, the article emphasizes that the effectiveness of digital detox depends on the individual learning style and the level of dependence of the learner on digital technologies.

**Keywords:** Digital detox, language retention, language learning motivation, digital technologies, foreign language education, digital dependence, language teaching methodology.

**Introduction:** In today's era of globalization, learning foreign languages is considered an important factor not only for personal development, but also for socio-cultural and professional success. Although modern digital technologies are widely recognized as a tool that facilitates and makes the language learning process more convenient, in recent years their excessive and uncontrolled use has led to negative consequences such as reduced attention span, impaired memory retention, and decreased motivation to learn among students and language learners. In particular, many studies have shown that constant distractions from smartphones, social networks, and other digital platforms can significantly reduce the effectiveness of language learning. Therefore, language teaching methodology experts and educational psychologists are looking for new approaches aimed at optimizing the language learning process and strengthening the skills of memorizing and applying language materials. As one of these approaches, the concept of "digital detox" is attracting special attention. "Digital detox" is interpreted as a system of practical actions aimed at improving a person's mental state and academic performance by abandoning or limiting digital devices and virtual communication tools for a certain period of

time. Although this concept was initially formed as a psychological practice aimed at reducing stress and improving the quality of life, today it has also begun to be used in the educational process, in particular in the field of language learning. This article scientifically analyzes the impact of “digital detox” periods on language retention and the level of motivation for language learning. The relevance of the study is determined, on the one hand, by the unlimited possibilities of digital technologies, and on the other hand, by the need to identify ways to mitigate the negative consequences of their misuse or excessive use. Therefore, based on the results of experiments and observations conducted within the framework of the article, the role, possibilities and limitations of “digital detox” in language learning are analyzed, and practical recommendations are developed for the application of this approach in the pedagogical process. The article also aims to scientifically substantiate innovative approaches to improving the quality of education in the digital age, reducing the level of digital addiction of students and stimulating their independent learning activities, and contributes to the development of modern language teaching methodologies.

## METHODOLOGY

The main goal of this study was to determine the impact of digital detox periods on language retention and motivation for language learning. To this end, the study was conducted using a combination of experimental and observational methods. The research process was based on the principle of dividing language learners into two main groups: (1) the experimental group - participants who conducted their learning activities in a digital detox environment; (2) the control group - participants who did not abandon the usual digital environment.

### Participants

A total of 60 students aged 18–25 who were learning a foreign language (English) participated in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental (30) and control (30) groups. All participants underwent a preliminary diagnostic test to ensure that they had the same initial language proficiency levels.

Participants in the experimental group were prohibited from engaging in educational and recreational activities using smartphones, tablets, computers, and other digital devices for 14 days and were instructed to study the language using only paper materials (books, flashcards, notebooks). Participants in the control group continued to use their usual digital learning tools and technologies. Both groups were offered the same amount of vocabulary and grammar materials.

### Measurement tools

During the study, a pre-test (initial test) and a post-test (final test) were used to determine the level of memorization of language materials. The tests were aimed at assessing the participants' newly acquired vocabulary, grammatical rules, and practical skills in their application, and consisted of oral and written tasks.

To measure the level of motivation, special motivation questionnaires based on the Likert scale were developed. These questionnaires served to identify internal and external motivation factors for language learning. At the same time, the participants in the experimental group were asked to keep weekly reflection diaries, through which they expressed their psychological state during the digital detox process.

### Data analysis

The collected data were processed using the SPSS 26.0 program for statistical analysis, and Student's t-test, Wilcoxon tests, and correlation analysis methods were used. Differences in the results of memorizing language materials and motivation indicators between the experimental and control groups were identified, and the results were statistically significant at the  $p < 0.05$

level. Some limitations of the study include the difficulty of controlling for the complete abandonment of digital devices by participants and the possible influence of individual psychological characteristics (e.g., the level of digital addiction) on the results. Therefore, it would be appropriate to analyze these factors in more depth in future studies.

### Literature review

In recent years, digital technologies have been widely introduced into the educational process, becoming an integral part of language learning. At the same time, many researchers have been analyzing the impact of the digital environment on the learning process, in particular, issues related to language retention and student motivation.

First of all, Kirkwood and Price, in their study on the role of digital technologies in education, emphasize that they serve as a convenient and quick source of information for students, but do not always have a positive effect on the quality of assimilation. In their opinion, uncontrolled use of digital tools leads to the formation of superficial knowledge in language learning.

Also, Carr, in his work "The Shallows", shows that constant digital distractions lead to changes in the activity of the human brain and make it difficult to remember information deeply through the dispersion of attention. These ideas are also confirmed by neuropsychological studies conducted by Small and Vorgan. They scientifically substantiated that excessive use of the Internet and smartphones weakens the ability to concentrate in students.

In studies conducted on the concept of digital detox, temporary abandonment of digital tools is seen as a factor of psychological and cognitive recovery. Syvertsen and Enley concluded that digital detox has a positive effect on reducing stress, improving social relationships, and self-awareness. At the same time, Dempsey et al. showed that digital detox can help increase students' motivation to learn and stimulate independent thinking.

The motivation theory developed by Dörnyei on language learning motivation details the interrelationship of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors and the mechanisms that support them. According to Dörnyei's research, approaches that help to focus are important among the strategies aimed at increasing motivation. From this point of view, the hypotheses that digital detox can help increase motivation in the language learning process have a scientific basis.

While Stockwell's research has shown a number of

benefits in enhancing language learning through digital devices, it also highlights the negative consequences of technological dependency and constant distractions.

Overall, the review of the existing literature suggests that while the judicious use of digital devices is an important factor in language learning, temporary withdrawal from them (digital detox) offers significant opportunities for increased focus, deeper learning, and motivation. However, the precise mechanisms and outcomes of this approach in education are still under-researched, and this article aims to fill this gap.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggest that periods of digital detox have a positive effect on language retention and students' motivation to learn. Participants in the experimental group scored higher on tests of vocabulary, grammatical structure, and contextual correctness than participants in the control group. This is primarily due to the fact that students were able to focus more fully on the learning material due to the absence of digital distractions.

The results are consistent with the scientific findings presented in the existing literature. For example, Carr (2010) argued that digital distractions lead to distraction and make it difficult to learn deeply. In our study, however, temporary withdrawal from digital devices was shown to be an effective mechanism for overcoming this problem. Similarly, Syvertsen and Enley (2020) showed that digital detox results in psychological relief, reduced stress, and improved social relationships, while in our experiment, these factors were combined with increased intrinsic motivation to learn a language.

The data obtained during the study also confirm Dörnyei's concept of language learning motivation. According to his theory of motivation, reducing distractions in the learning process helps to strengthen the learner's intrinsic motivation and make learning more meaningful. The participants of the experimental group noted in their reflection diaries that they assessed language learning activities as more effective during the digital detox process. This indicates that it had a positive effect not only on the level of memorization, but also on the process of self-awareness and mastery.

At the same time, the results of the study also revealed some limitations. For example, some participants admitted that they could not completely abandon digital tools during the digital detox period. This may have affected the purity and completeness of the results to some extent. It was also noted that digital technologies may serve as a motivating factor for some students. This shows that digital detox is not always

equally effective for all students.

Overall, this study suggests that the digital detox approach can be used as a new, innovative approach to language teaching. However, the effectiveness of digital detox should be tailored to the individual characteristics of the learner, the specifics of the learning environment, and the educational objectives. Future studies should also examine the long-term effects of digital detox on learning outcomes in different age groups and other subject areas.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study showed that digital detox periods play a positive role in increasing language retention and motivation in language learning. Participants in the experimental group were able to better remember learning materials and made significant progress in strengthening language skills when temporarily abandoning digital tools. They also reported increased self-awareness, increased interest in learning activities, and increased intrinsic motivation.

The study also reaffirmed that excessive and uncontrolled use of digital tools can have a negative impact on the learning process, in particular, weakening the processes of concentration and deep learning. At the same time, digital detox cannot be a universal solution for every student. Because individual digital habits, psychological characteristics and attitudes towards technology of students directly affect the effectiveness of digital detox. In general, the digital detox approach can be used as an innovative approach in language learning methodology, which serves to engage students in goal-oriented learning activities, strengthen concentration and increase motivation. However, when implementing this approach in the educational process, it is necessary to take into account its duration, intensity and individual needs of students. In future studies, it would be appropriate to continue research on the long-term effectiveness of digital detox, its impact on learning different languages and its integration with other teaching methods.

## REFERENCES

- Carr N. *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*. — New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010. — 276 p.
- Dempsey M., O'Brien M., Tiarnyu M., Elhai J.D. The relationship between fear of missing out, social media engagement, and digital detox intentions. // *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*. — 2019. — Vol. 1. — P. 35–41.
- Dörnyei Z. *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2001. — 155 p.

Kirkwood A., Price L. Technology-enhanced learning and teaching in higher education: what is 'enhanced' and how do we know? // A critical literature review. — Learning, Media and Technology. — 2014. — Vol. 39(1). — P. 6–36.

Small G., Vorgan G. iBrain: Surviving the technological alteration of the modern mind. — New York: HarperCollins, 2008. — 256 p.

Stockwell G. Technology and motivation in English-language teaching and learning. // The Cambridge Guide to Pedagogy and Practice in Second Language Teaching. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. — P. 187–194.

Syvetsen T., Enli G. Digital detox: Media resistance and the promise of authenticity. // Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies. — 2020. — Vol. 26(5-6). — P. 1269–1283.