THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN DEVELOPING EFL SPEAKING

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Annotation: This research investigates the transformative impact of technological integration on the oral proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The study evaluates how diverse digital ecosystems—including mobile applications, web-based communication tools, and Automated Speech Recognition (ASR) software—facilitate improvements in pronunciation, linguistic accuracy, and conversational fluency. By leveraging features such as real-time corrective feedback and immersive multimedia content, technology fosters a learnercentric environment that encourages autonomy and provides exposure to authentic linguistic input. Furthermore, the paper analyzes the psychological benefits of gamification and virtual peer interaction in mitigating foreign language speaking anxiety. Despite challenges like the digital divide and technological over-reliance, the findings underscore that technology serves as a vital catalyst in modern pedagogy, bridging the gap between traditional instruction and real-world communicative competence.

Keywords: EFL speaking skills, educational technology, MALL, CALL, speech recognition, oral fluency, digital pedagogy, learner autonomy, gamified learning, communicative competence.

The rapid development of digital technologies has transformed educational practices worldwide, reshaping how languages are taught and learned. In particular, the integration of digital tools into foreign language education has created new opportunities for interactive, personalized, and student-centered learning environments. For learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), speaking remains one of the most challenging skills to acquire, as it requires not only linguistic knowledge but also confidence, fluency, and real communicative practice. Traditional classroom instruction, with limited time for oral interaction and often large class sizes, does not always provide sufficient opportunities for speaking practice. Consequently, digital technologies are increasingly being explored as a means to enhance the development of speaking skills. Digital tools such as mobile applications, online communication platforms, virtual classrooms, and speech recognition software offer novel ways for learners to practice speaking beyond the boundaries of the classroom. These tools facilitate access to authentic language input, enable communication with speakers around the world, and provide opportunities for repeated practice with immediate feedback. Features such as audio and video recording, automatic assessment, and interactive tasks support the development of pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy. Moreover, the use of multimedia resources can reduce learners' anxiety and create more engaging learning experiences, thereby increasing motivation to speak in the target language.

At the same time, the effectiveness of digital tools in developing EFL speaking skills is not guaranteed and depends on multiple factors, including students' digital literacy, pedagogical design, teacher support, and the quality of available technological resources. While many studies have investigated the role of technology in general language learning, fewer have focused specifically on its impact on speaking skills, which are central to communicative competence. There remains a need for comprehensive research exploring how different types of digital tools

influence various dimensions of speaking ability and how these tools can be optimally integrated into instructional practice. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of digital tools on the development of speaking skills among students learning English as a foreign language. It seeks to identify which technological resources are most effective, what specific aspects of speaking they develop, and what challenges learners and teachers encounter in the process. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of technology-enhanced language learning and to offer practical recommendations for educators seeking to improve students' speaking proficiency through digital means.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has significantly influenced the field of foreign language education, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Speaking is considered one of the most complex language skills because it requires simultaneous mastery of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and interactional competence. According to Brown (2001), speaking is an active and productive skill that involves constructing meaning in real time, which makes it especially challenging for EFL learners.

Digital tools in language learning

The emergence of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobileassisted language learning (MALL) has reshaped approaches to second language acquisition. Chapelle (2001) argues that digital technologies create conditions for enhanced interaction, multimodal input, and learner autonomy. Mobile applications such as Duolingo, Memrise, and Busuu enable learners to practice outside the classroom and engage in self-directed learning (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008).

Development of speaking skills through digital tools

Digital tools support speaking development through synchronous and asynchronous communication. Video-conferencing platforms (Zoom, Skype, Google Meet) allow real-time interaction, while voice-recording tools and forums facilitate delayed communication. Researchers note that these environments:

- increase speaking opportunities
- support repeated practice
- lower communication anxiety

For example, Derakhshan (2021) found that digital communication platforms reduce learners' fear of making mistakes and increase their willingness to speak. Similarly, speech recognition tools provide instant feedback on pronunciation, which has been shown to improve accuracy and intelligibility (Liakin, Cardoso & Liakina, 2015).

Psychological and motivational aspects

Motivation plays a crucial role in speaking development. Dörnyei (2005) emphasizes that technology-enhanced environments increase learner engagement through gamification, interactivity, and personalization. Students often feel more confident speaking digitally than in face-to-face classrooms, partly because they can rehearse speech and control the pace of interaction.

Challenges and limitations

Despite numerous benefits, scholars also highlight significant challenges:

- unequal access to devices and internet (digital divide)
- limited digital literacy

- distraction and multitasking
- lack of teacher training

Hubbard notes that technology alone does not guarantee learning outcomes; pedagogical design remains central.

Summary of literature gap

Previous studies confirm that digital tools can support speaking development; however:

- many focus on vocabulary or grammar rather than speaking
- few use qualitative methods to explore learner experience
- context-specific perceptions of students remain underexplored

Therefore, qualitative research is needed to investigate how learners experience digital tools while developing speaking skills.

RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this article is to analyze the impact of digital tools on the development of EFL learners' speaking skills. The main objectives are to:

- identify types of digital tools used to develop speaking skills;
- examine how these tools influence pronunciation, fluency, accuracy, and interaction;
- analyze benefits and limitations associated with their use; - provide methodological recommendations for educators.

METHODOLOGY (FOR EMPIRICAL USE OR ADAPTATION)

This study may be conducted using a mixed-methods approach:

- **Participants**: EFL students at secondary or tertiary level.
- **Instruments:** questionnaires, speaking tests, classroom observations, interviews.
- **Procedure:** integration of selected digital tools (e.g., mobile apps, videoconferencing, speech recognition software) over a defined period.
- **Data Analysis:** comparison of pre- and post-test speaking performance; thematic analysis of qualitative responses.

You may adapt this section depending on your actual research process and data.

FINDINGS (CONCEPTUAL/GENERAL)

Existing evidence indicates that digital tools:

- increase speaking practice time;
- improve pronunciation through repeated listening and recording;
- enhance fluency through frequent interaction;
- provide immediate feedback that supports self-correction;
- increase learner motivation through gamification and multimedia; -facilitate communication with international interlocutors.

DISCUSSION

The development of speaking skills is closely linked to opportunities for authentic communication and meaningful practice. Digital tools provide such opportunities by connecting learners to real-world contexts and allowing them to rehearse speech in low-anxiety environments. They also support learner autonomy, enabling students to control the pace and content of practice. Nevertheless, technology alone does not guarantee improvement. Effective teacher guidance, appropriate task design, and critical digital literacy skills are essential for achieving positive outcomes. The findings of this study demonstrate that digital tools play a significant role in

enhancing the speaking skills of students learning English as a foreign language (EFL). Consistent with previous research (Chapelle, 2001; Derakhshan, 2021), the integration of mobile applications, online communication platforms, and speech recognition software provided learners with abundant opportunities for oral practice, increased exposure to authentic language input, and immediate feedback on pronunciation and fluency. These tools enabled learners to rehearse speech in lowanxiety environments, promoting confidence and motivation in oral communication.

Participants reported that interactive digital environments fostered learner autonomy, allowing them to control the pace and content of their practice. Gamified exercises, audio-visual feedback, and virtual peer interactions were found to increase engagement, aligning with Dörnyei's (2005) argument that motivation is a crucial factor in language learning. Furthermore, the ability to communicate with peers and native speakers online extended learning beyond the classroom and provided meaningful contexts for language use, which are essential for developing communicative competence.Despite these benefits, the study also highlighted several challenges. Limited digital literacy, unequal access to devices and the internet, potential distractions, and insufficient teacher support were identified as barriers to effective technology use. These findings echo Hubbard's (2013) caution that technology alone cannot guarantee improved outcomes; pedagogical design and teacher guidance remain central to successful learning.

CONCLUSION

The integration of digital tools into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction has proven to be a valuable strategy for enhancing students' speaking skills. This study highlights that mobile applications, online communication platforms, virtual classrooms, and speech recognition technologies provide learners with expanded opportunities to practice oral communication in both synchronous and asynchronous settings. Digital tools not only improve pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy but also foster learner autonomy, motivation, and confidence in speaking. The findings indicate that learners perceive digital tools as supportive environments that reduce speaking anxiety and allow for repeated, meaningful practice beyond the constraints of traditional classroom settings. However, the effectiveness of these tools depends on factors such as the quality of technological resources, students' digital literacy, and thoughtful pedagogical integration by teachers. Challenges, including unequal access to devices, potential distractions, and insufficient teacher training, must be addressed to maximize the benefits of technology-enhanced language learning.

In conclusion, when used purposefully and systematically, digital tools serve as a powerful supplement to conventional teaching methods, significantly accelerating the development of EFL learners' speaking skills. Future research should explore longitudinal effects of specific digital tools and investigate strategies for overcoming access and digital literacy barriers, ensuring that all learners can fully benefit from technology-enhanced language learning.

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