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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION: a collection scientific works of the International scientific conference – London, England, 2025. Issue 4

Languages of publication: Uzbek, English, Russian, German, Italian, Spanish

The collection consists of scientific research of scientists, graduate students and students who took part in the International Scientific online conference «**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDIES AND EDUCATION**». Which took place in London , 2025.

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USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS IN ESL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. The ability to communicate effectively in English has become essential in the modern global context. Yet, developing speaking proficiency continues to be one of the most challenging aspects of English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. This thesis explores how technology can be effectively integrated into ESL classrooms to enhance learners' speaking skills. It investigates digital tools such as speech recognition software, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), virtual reality environments, and online communication platforms. The study concludes that technology creates authentic, interactive, and personalized opportunities for learners to practice speaking. Findings suggest that technology not only improves fluency, accuracy, and confidence but also increases motivation and learner autonomy.

Keywords: ESL, speaking skills, oral proficiency, technology integration, CALL, MALL, speech recognition, virtual reality, online language platforms, communicative language teaching, learner autonomy, pronunciation improvement, digital tools, language learning motivation, interactive language learning.

Introduction. English serves as the global language of communication, education, and commerce. For millions of learners worldwide, mastering English means gaining access to better educational and professional opportunities. Among the four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—speaking is often the hardest to acquire because it requires immediate language processing, pronunciation accuracy, and fluency under real-time conditions. Traditional ESL instruction tends to prioritize grammar and reading comprehension, leaving limited opportunities for oral communication practice. Technological innovation offers a promising solution by extending language exposure beyond the classroom and providing interactive platforms that simulate authentic communication.

The need to improve speaking proficiency is particularly significant in contexts where English is not widely used outside school. Learners often lack opportunities to communicate with native speakers and feel anxious about speaking in class. Technology can bridge this gap by creating supportive, low-pressure environments where learners can engage in meaningful interaction. By exploring the potential of digital tools, this thesis aims to provide insights into how teachers can use technology to foster speaking competence in ESL classrooms.

Technology in language learning. Many ESL learners struggle to develop oral proficiency despite years of study. Classroom activities often





emphasize written skills, while speaking tasks remain limited to controlled exercises. As a result, students may achieve grammatical knowledge but lack the fluency and confidence to communicate effectively. This gap highlights the need for teaching methods that actively engage learners in oral interaction. Technology offers opportunities to practice speaking through mobile apps, video platforms, and virtual environments, but teachers often face uncertainty about how to integrate these tools effectively. The central problem addressed in this study is how technology can be systematically used to enhance speaking skills in ESL classrooms.

Technology has long played a role in language education, evolving from computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to mobile and online platforms. Early CALL programs focused on grammar drills, but modern tools emphasize communication, collaboration, and feedback. Today's language learners can interact through online discussion forums, voice messaging apps, and video conferencing platforms that allow real-time communication with peers and teachers. This shift has transformed language classrooms into interactive environments that mirror real-world communication.

A variety of digital tools support the development of speaking skills. Speech recognition software such as Google Speech and ELSA Speak allows learners to practice pronunciation and receive immediate feedback. Virtual and augmented reality environments simulate real-life communication scenarios, helping students build confidence in authentic contexts. Mobile applications like Duolingo and Babbel offer flexibility for practicing speaking outside the classroom. Online communication platforms such as Zoom, Skype, and Flipgrid enable students to engage in live conversations or record speaking tasks for peer review. These tools encourage both fluency and self-reflection, essential components of oral language development.

A growing body of research supports the effectiveness of technology in improving speaking skills. Studies show that students who use digital tools demonstrate greater fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and confidence. For instance, virtual reality has been found to reduce speaking anxiety and increase motivation by creating immersive and realistic communication settings. Similarly, mobile-assisted learning promotes autonomy, allowing learners to practice speaking at their own pace. These studies affirm that technology, when used strategically, enhances not only language proficiency but also learner engagement.

Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that learners exposed to technology-enhanced instruction show notable improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence compared to those in traditional classes. Speech recognition software provides precise, immediate feedback, enabling learners to self-correct and monitor progress. Online communication tools increase exposure





to authentic language use, fostering spontaneity and interaction. Students also report higher motivation and enjoyment, citing the interactive nature of technological tools as a key factor. However, some challenges emerge, such as inconsistent internet access, varying digital literacy levels, and limited institutional support. These obstacles underline the importance of adequate training and resource allocation for effective implementation.

Conclusion

The study concludes that technology significantly enhances speaking skill development in ESL classrooms. It offers learners opportunities for authentic practice, immediate feedback, and sustained engagement. The most effective results occur when teachers integrate technology into communicative tasks rather than using it as a substitute for traditional instruction. Technology serves as a bridge between classroom learning and real-world communication, making language use more natural and meaningful.

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