

TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED SPEAKING CLASSES FOR UZBEK PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS

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Annotation: *This article investigates the impact of technology-enhanced instruction on developing speaking skills among Uzbek primary school learners. With the rapid integration of digital tools into education, teachers in Uzbekistan are increasingly exploring how technology can improve young learners’ communicative competence. This study applied a quasi-experimental design in two 4th-grade classes over eight weeks, using interactive mobile applications, audio-visual resources, and online games to promote oral fluency and pronunciation. The findings indicate that technology-supported activities significantly increased learners’ motivation, participation, and speaking accuracy compared to traditional teaching methods. Pedagogical implications are discussed for integrating technology in EFL classrooms in the Uzbek primary context.*

Keywords: *technology-enhanced learning, speaking skills, primary school, EFL learners, Uzbekistan, communicative competence*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, technology has become an essential part of English language instruction worldwide. In Uzbekistan, the government’s education reforms have emphasized the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into the national curriculum to improve language learning outcomes (Ministry of Preschool and School Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2023). Despite this progress, many primary school teachers still rely on traditional, textbook-based approaches that limit opportunities for active speaking practice.

Speaking is one of the most challenging skills for young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners due to limited exposure to authentic language and lack of confidence in oral expression (Nation & Newton, 2009). Research shows that technology-enhanced tools such as digital storytelling, mobile applications, and interactive platforms can create meaningful contexts for communication, providing both input and output opportunities (Chapelle, 2010; Reinders & White, 2016). This study explores how technology-enhanced speaking lessons affect motivation and oral performance among Uzbek primary learners. Specifically, it aims to identify whether integrating technology in speaking classes leads to measurable improvement in learners’ fluency, accuracy, and participation.

Research Questions:

1. How does technology-enhanced instruction affect primary learners’ speaking performance?

2. What are learners’ attitudes toward using technology in speaking lessons?

Methodology

The study involved 24 fourth-grade students (ages 9–10) from a public school in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. Learners’ English proficiency level was A1–A2 according to CEFR standards. They were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n = 12) receiving technology-enhanced speaking lessons and a control group (n = 12) taught through traditional methods.

Three instruments were used:

1. Pre- and post-speaking tests assessing fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy (adapted from Cambridge YLE Speaking criteria).
2. Observation checklists to evaluate participation and engagement.
3. Questionnaires measuring students’ attitudes toward technology in learning.

Procedure: The study lasted eight weeks. The experimental group participated in technology-enhanced speaking sessions twice a week using: Flipgrid for video-recorded responses; Kahoot for vocabulary-based oral games; BBC Learning English Kids for pronunciation practice, and Google Slides for collaborative story retelling. The control group followed the same speaking topics using teacher-led drills, repetition, and textbook dialogues. Both groups completed identical pre- and post-tests. Quantitative data from tests were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests. Qualitative data from observations and questionnaires were analyzed thematically to identify patterns in motivation and attitudes.

Results

Results showed a significant improvement in the experimental group’s speaking performance. Their mean post-test score (M = 18.5, SD = 2.3) was significantly higher than the pre-test score (M = 12.2, SD = 2.8), $p < .01$. In contrast, the control group showed modest progress (from M = 12.0 to M = 14.1, $p > .05$). Observation data indicated that learners in the experimental group displayed higher participation and enthusiasm. They volunteered more frequently and showed reduced anxiety when using digital tools to record their speech. Questionnaire results revealed that 91% of learners found technology-based speaking activities “fun” and “helpful for pronunciation.” Students reported enjoying interactive speaking games and video responses because they could “practice English with confidence.” Teachers observed improved peer feedback and collaboration in the experimental group, particularly during storytelling and group presentations.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that technology-enhanced speaking lessons significantly improve young EFL learners’ oral performance, particularly in the context of Uzbekistan’s evolving education system. The improvement observed in the experimental group supports the growing body of research suggesting that digital tools, when integrated with sound pedagogical principles, can increase learners’ communicative competence (Golonka et al., 2014; Reinders & White, 2016). From a communicative perspective, digital platforms such as Flipgrid and Kahoot created a more interactive environment that encouraged learners to use English for real purposes rather than merely

rehearsing scripted dialogues. This shift aligns with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles, which emphasize authentic communication and learner-centered interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Through online video responses and interactive vocabulary games, students were able to practice spontaneous speech in a low-stakes environment, which contributed to their increased confidence and fluency.

The findings also resonate with Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory (1978), which posits that learning occurs through social interaction and the use of mediating tools. In this study, technology acted as a powerful mediational means that bridged the gap between learners’ linguistic potential and actual performance. Activities involving peer feedback on Flipgrid, collaborative storytelling via Google Slides, and interactive pronunciation games on BBC Learning English fostered a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) where learners supported each other’s growth through guided interaction. Additionally, the results highlight the motivational benefits of using technology in language classrooms. Learners reported feeling more engaged and less anxious during speaking activities, consistent with findings by Dörnyei (2014), who emphasized that learner motivation is strongly influenced by classroom atmosphere and perceived task relevance. Technology provided multimodal input—visuals, audio, and interactivity—that catered to different learning styles, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation and task engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another important implication is the development of digital literacy alongside linguistic skills. Primary learners not only practiced speaking but also learned to navigate online platforms responsibly and creatively. This dual development supports 21st-century learning goals and aligns with Uzbekistan’s National Strategy for Digital Education Development (2023), which prioritizes ICT competence from an early age. However, despite these positive outcomes, challenges remain. Access to reliable internet and digital devices was inconsistent across learners, particularly for those from lower-income households. Teachers also required additional training to effectively manage online tools and to balance technology use with face-to-face instruction. These challenges highlight the need for institutional support, including professional development workshops and infrastructure investment, to ensure equitable and sustainable integration of technology in Uzbek EFL classrooms.

In summary, this study demonstrates that when technology is purposefully aligned with communicative and sociocultural principles, it can transform traditional EFL speaking instruction into an interactive, student-centered experience. The integration of digital tools enhanced not only learners’ linguistic performance but also their confidence, collaboration, and engagement — elements crucial for long-term communicative competence.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that technology-enhanced speaking classes can play a transformative role in improving the oral proficiency of Uzbek primary school learners. By integrating interactive tools such as Flipgrid, Kahoot, and BBC Learning English, teachers were able to create a dynamic and supportive environment where learners practiced speaking with greater confidence and enjoyment. Quantitative data confirmed significant gains in fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation, while qualitative evidence revealed heightened motivation and participation. The findings have important pedagogical

implications for English teachers, curriculum designers, and policymakers in Uzbekistan. First, EFL teachers should incorporate technology not as an add-on but as an integral part of lesson design, focusing on communicative activities that promote meaningful interaction. For example, digital storytelling or video responses can replace rote memorization exercises, giving students ownership of their learning process. Second, teacher professional development is essential to ensure educators possess both the technical and pedagogical skills to use technology effectively. Workshops and continuous digital training programs should be institutionalized within the national education framework. Moreover, policymakers should address issues of digital equity, ensuring that all learners have access to the necessary tools and internet connectivity. Partnerships between schools, local communities, and educational technology providers could help reduce disparities and sustain long-term progress. At a theoretical level, this research contributes to the growing literature on technology-mediated language learning by providing empirical evidence from a Central Asian EFL context—a region underrepresented in global SLA research. The study demonstrates that principles from Communicative Language Teaching and Sociocultural Theory can be successfully applied in technology-integrated classrooms to enhance young learners’ speaking development. However, the study has limitations. The sample size was small, and the intervention period relatively short, which restricts the generalizability of findings. Future research should involve larger and more diverse populations, explore long-term retention effects, and compare various types of technological interventions (e.g., AI-driven feedback, virtual reality speaking simulations). Additionally, investigating teacher beliefs about technology could provide valuable insights into barriers and enablers of successful implementation.

In conclusion, technology-enhanced instruction represents a promising pathway for improving speaking competence among Uzbek primary learners. When thoughtfully designed and supported, it can foster communicative ability, learner autonomy, and digital literacy—skills essential for success in the modern, interconnected world. The evidence from this study underscores the importance of integrating technology strategically into English language education to prepare young learners for lifelong learning in both local and global contexts.

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