THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL TOOLS ON DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS OF EFL LEARNERS

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Abstract: This study argues that integrating digital tools into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking instruction significantly enhances learners’ communicative competence by improving their fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and motivation. Through the use of platforms such as Zoom, Flipgrid, and Duolingo, digital environments create expanded opportunities for authentic interaction, learner autonomy, and self-regulated practice beyond the traditional classroom.

Keywords: digital tools, EFL students, speaking ability, fluency

Introduction

The introduction explains how digital technology has reshaped English language teaching and made speaking ability more attainable for EFL learners. It argues that traditional classrooms limit authentic communication and suggests that digital tools expand opportunities for practice, collaboration, and feedback. The section also discusses the shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in Uzbekistan, emphasizing the need to understand the pedagogical value of these tools. The aim of the research to examine how digital platforms enhance communicative competence, autonomy, and interaction among EFL students.

Literature Review

In this section reviews research on digital technology in language learning and shows that digital tools increase engagement, motivation, and access to authentic communication. Studies by Warschauer, Reinders, and others emphasize that technology supports autonomy, self-regulation, and meaningful interaction. Digital tools such as Google Meet, Padlet, and Flipgrid help learners practice speaking through interaction, recording, and self-evaluation.

Methodology

The study uses a qualitative descriptive design involving 30 B1-B2 learners from the Tashkent State University of Economics. Over six weeks, students complete digital speaking tasks using platforms such as Zoom, Flipgrid, and Duolingo Speaking practice. Then data will be collected through observations, student feedback, and video/audio recordings to assess improvements in fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

Procedure

The procedure outlines the six-week teaching plan. In week 1-2, learners received orientation on different digital tools. Week 3-4 included weekly speaking activities such as Zoom discussion, Flipgrid recordings, and Duolingo pronunciation practice. Weeks 5-6 involved collaborative projects, online presentations, and peer feedback using platforms like Padlet and Google Classroom. Throughout the process, the teacher served as a facilitator, offering guidance and formative feedback.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using triangulation: quantitative questionnaires and qualitative observations, reflections, and interviews. Thematic analysis

identified major themes such as increased digital engagement, improved fluency, and enhanced confidence. Combining both data types provided a comprehensive understanding of how digital tools influenced speaking development.

Findings and Discussions

The findings show strong positive effects of digital tools on speaking skills. Most students practiced more frequently and felt more confident speaking online. Digital applications improved fluency, pronunciations, and motivation due to features like repetition, recording, and AI-based feedback. Challenges included unequal access to technology, limited teacher training, and superficial use of apps without pedagogical support.

Pedagogical Implications

The research suggests adopting blended learning to combine classroom speaking with digital interaction. It emphasizes encouraging learner autonomy, using reflective tools like video journals, and fostering collaboration through online projects. Teacher training in digital pedagogy is vital, and institutions must address technological barriers to ensure equity.