



THE ROLE OF ONLINE TOOLS IN DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract

This research examines how online tools enhance speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. The study was carried out at School No. 39 in Sirdaryo district with 16 secondary school students aged 15–17. It explores the impact of digital platforms such as Zoom, Flipgrid, and Google Meet on improving learners' oral fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. The results indicate that integrating online tools increases students' exposure to authentic communication, encourages peer interaction, and supports self-directed learning. However, the findings also highlight challenges such as unstable internet connection and limited digital literacy. Overall, the study concludes that online speaking platforms, when used strategically, foster a more engaging and communicative environment that motivates students to use English more frequently and naturally.

Keywords: online learning, speaking skills, digital tools, motivation, communicative competence, EFL

Introduction

In recent years, the use of online learning tools has transformed the way English is taught and learned worldwide. Particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, both teachers and students have recognized the importance of digital technologies in language education. Speaking, as one of the most interactive and performance-based skills, has benefited from the introduction of online tools that promote real-time communication, feedback, and collaboration. In Uzbekistan, online education is still developing, yet it provides new opportunities for EFL learners to practice speaking beyond the classroom. This study aims to explore how online tools can improve speaking skills and overcome traditional barriers such as limited classroom time and speaking anxiety.

Literature Review

Scholars have emphasized that online learning platforms provide flexible and interactive spaces for language practice. According to Warschauer (1996), computer-assisted language learning (CALL) encourages authentic communication through multimedia interaction. More recent studies (e.g., Reinders & White, 2011) show that digital tools increase learner autonomy and promote continuous engagement with the target language. In the Uzbek EFL context, learners often lack opportunities to practice speaking in authentic communicative situations. Online tools like Zoom, Google Meet, and social media applications help fill this gap by connecting learners to diverse audiences and real-world contexts. Moreover, research by Ghaith (2018) highlights that online environments reduce affective barriers and enhance motivation through collaborative projects and feedback systems. However, challenges remain regarding access to technology, teacher preparedness, and sustainable integration into curriculum design.

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of online tools in improving students' speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

The objectives are:

1. To identify how online platforms facilitate speaking practice among EFL learners.
2. To examine the benefits and challenges of using online tools for oral communication.
3. To provide recommendations for integrating online tools effectively in EFL speaking instruction.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted with 16 students from grades 9–10 at School No. 39, Sirdaryo district. The participants engaged in online speaking activities using platforms such as Zoom and Flipgrid over a four-week period. The data were collected through classroom observation, online discussion recordings, and post-activity surveys. The analysis focused on students' participation, fluency, pronunciation, and attitudes toward online learning. Teacher reflections were also included to evaluate pedagogical implications.

Results and Discussion



The results revealed that online tools significantly improved students' willingness to speak in English. Many learners reported feeling more comfortable speaking in online environments than in face-to-face classes, as digital tools reduced anxiety and allowed more preparation time. Platforms like Flipgrid encouraged learners to record and re-record their responses, leading to better pronunciation and fluency.

Furthermore, the use of breakout rooms in Zoom promoted pair and group interaction, increasing learners' confidence and participation. Online discussions also provided immediate feedback from both teachers and peers, which enhanced self-awareness and motivation. However, some challenges emerged, including unstable internet connectivity and limited access to quality devices. Teachers also faced difficulties in monitoring all students during online sessions. Despite these limitations, most learners expressed that online speaking activities helped them become more confident and autonomous English speakers.

Conclusion

The study concludes that online tools play a vital role in developing EFL learners' speaking skills. They create interactive environments where learners can communicate authentically, receive feedback, and build confidence in using English. For effective implementation, teachers should combine online tools with communicative tasks that foster creativity and collaboration. It is also important to provide digital training for both teachers and students to ensure the successful integration of technology into language instruction. In the Uzbek educational context, using online platforms can significantly extend speaking opportunities beyond the traditional classroom and help learners achieve higher levels of communicative competence.

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