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## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE LEARNER'S SPEAKING SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

The globalization era has modified many regular practices and drastic changes have taken place almost in all fields. These tremendous vicissitudes occur when the globe has experienced modern information technology. This modern world accentuates the importance of communication skills which plays a vital role and one must have mastery over these skills to get success in their respective fields. This modern technology instigates people to set strong desires and goals globally which can be met by excellent communication skills through the English language. Speaking is the most important skill among the four communication skills which is called an 'active' skill. Technology can stimulate the liveliness of learners and immerse them in a variety of learning scenarios. Technology gives learners a chance to understand the language through self-directed actions and provides the prospects for self-paced interactions with privacy. This article sheds light on the importance of speaking skills and suggests some of the technology-based learning which attracts most learners to develop their speaking skills.

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### KEYWORDS:

Digital Technology, Speaking Skills, Enhance Speaking Skills, Active Skills, Productive Skills

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking in English helps the learners to access the up-to-date information in fields including science, technology and health and so on. Fluent speaking skill in English can help the learners to communicate easily and explore their ideas effectively. Speaking is the

skill that a person will be judged upon most in real life situations. According to Brown, (2001) “the productive skills of communication is the speaking skills which express meaning that can be directly and empirically observed”. Three important interpretations are identified in this definition of speaking skills. First, by ‘productive skill’ is the ability of a person to actively produce the language by coordinating the organs of speech such as the lips, tongue, teeth, vocal cords, larynx &, pharynx &, etc. The next point is ‘to express meaning’ interprets the purpose of producing language in verbal communication and the means of delivering ideas and experiences to the listener and others. Third, ‘being able to be directly and empirically observed’ means that the implementation of speaking skills can be directly heard or seen and empirically measured in the speaking process by looking at the correctness and effectiveness of the speaker.

### **Speaking Skills**

Speaking is considered to be the most important active skill (Widdowson, 1994) for foreign language learning (Khamkhien, 2010). It is producing utterances for communicating messages (Rodrigues, 2000:32). It starts from infancy to be developed during childhood to maturity (Levelt, 1989: 2). Abdel Salam (2002) defined speaking skills as a collection of micro-skills which include syntax, grammar, morphology, pragmatics or social language, semantics and phonology. Speaking is an interactive process because it requires the involvement of another person unlike listening, reading or writing (Noll, 2006: 70). Speaking skill includes various aspects like producing the utterances, the complete process of constructing meanings, and receiving and processing information with confidence (Bygate, 1987).

### **Importance of Speaking Skills**

Speakers can't produce effective and appropriate outcomes until they have been exposed to some specific linguistic competencies such as grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, as well as sociolinguistic competence. Speech can be predictable as language functions or patterns that tend to express certain discourse situations like requesting, greeting, etc. Speaking has a meaning when it enables the learners to explore their own selves and clarify their identity. When speaking happens, learners express their views; feel confident to speak up when issues of high interest occur. They also develop a range of skills, strategies, and behaviours which assist them to manage the challengeable situations. The speaking opportunities facilitate a stronger sense of membership, respect, and self-worth, learning management, agency, and personalizing learning. Celce-Murcia (2001) stated that authenticity is very important when learners ought to speak. The topics should

be of great interest to the learners with a focus on meanings, values, collaboration, social development, and the provision of a rich context. A speaker is a person, a locutionary agent, who engages in a linguistic activity with the intention to communicate (Maynard, 2007: 18). Each participant takes turns at being speaker and hearer. Sometimes more than one person speaks at the same time, but generally, the changes from speaker to the hearer and back again are managed with a great degree of finesse (Jackson & Stockwell, 2011: 87). They also need to understand the sociolinguistic competence, which includes the answers to many questions e.g., when, how, what, who, why to produce a piece of language. Therefore, a good speaker is a person who is able to master the success of exchange (Van Duzer, 1997). Speakers of the English language must anticipate the linguistic elements and endeavour to produce these linguistic elements in their specific contextualized situations.

Language learners need to know the basic skills speaking that are required to become a good speaker. The following four important basic skills of speaking are:

1. **Fluency.** Fluency is about how comfortable and confident the speakers are while speaking English. If a speaker can speak for an extended period, that is an indicator of strong fluency. It is also about showing a clear connection between each point and providing the right information. This skill helps the listener to follow what the speaker says and not miss any point.
2. **Vocabulary.** The right word choice and sentence-making bring the right rationalization in communication. A good speaker constantly grows her/his vocabulary. The more interesting and technical words make the speaking skills stronger. The best way to grow ones vocabulary is to read in English and make a note of any new words that encounter in a vocabulary notebook.
3. **Grammar.** Grammar does matter and fewer mistakes make the speaking skill weaker. Good speakers need not use perfect grammar. Certainly, though, it is a good idea to make sure that speakers have to know the major parts of the grammar and their impacts.
4. **Pronunciation.** Pronunciation includes certain important sub-skills which are mainstream speaking skills. The sub-skills of pronunciation are namely word and sentence stress, intonation, rhythm, and the use of each sound of a language. Without practicing these basic skills, one cannot speak and be understood. A well-practiced speaker can use all the nuances of these sub-skills of pronunciation and can emphasize or change the mood of the communication effectively. Hence,

the art of handling the pronunciation can change the attitude of the listener and the speech becomes more impactful. A good way to practice pronunciation is to listen to the expert's speech often and copy the sub-skills. In simple words, listen to someone with good pronunciation speaks and try to imitate them as closely as possible.

### **Modern Technologies in Developing Speaking Skills**

Modern technology helps mankind to import speaking skills incredibly through its techniques. A device that is already programmed by the technology expert, offers feedback and helps learners to track mistakes and link immediately to exercises that focus on specific errors. The feedback provided by the software is qualitative which is proved by many research studies. The links are available to find explanations, additional help, and reference, and the value of technology is still augmented. Some of the modern technologies available in English language learning are:

- i. Communication laboratory
- ii. Language Software with Speech recognition
- iii. Internet
- iv. TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning)
- v. Pod casting
- vi. Internet References for Speaking skill

#### **i) Communication Laboratory**

The communication laboratory is developed with help of the introduction of language software which helps to develop language skills. By integrating suitable software through computers, the learners can play it to listen and speak again and again with their own interest and try to improve their speaking skills. The accuracy of language delivery in all means of communication is essential in this digitalized world. The headphones in the communication laboratory guides the learners to create interest in listening and induces them to read and speak again and again to perfect their speaking skill effectively in the English language.

#### **ii) Language Software with Speech recognition**

Language software with speech recognition helps improve the learners' speaking skills by converting spoken words to machine-readable input. The device recognizes the learners' accuracy of what was read and then provides a positive comment like "You sound great!". The learners have an opportunity to try again and again when they commit mistakes and in this way, the learner can figure out if she/he is reading well or not. When

the learner's skill improves, the technology reads less material so that the learner reads more. This software is able to evaluate learners' speech and provides scores of grammar, pronunciation, and comprehension. In addition to that, it provides the correct forms, for example, if a learner mispronounces a word, the tool which is meant for pronunciation can immediately spot it and help to correct it. This speech recognition device can be very useful for distance learners because they don't have a teacher who corrects their speech instantly at their place. Language learners can use this device utmost for their flawless speaking skills and improve their speaking skills as native speakers.

### **iii) Internet**

Internet is a term interlaced with human life and extensively used by people throughout the world. Learners are allowed to use the internet to learn the English language and communicate competence. The language classroom integration the online teaching is an interesting event as it makes the learners choose their own suitable materials for their preferred teacher. They can follow the instructions of the grammar exercises and can work out the exercises and verify the answers which are available online. Through Internet, learners can collect data from various sources for any instruction to improve speaking skills. They can use Skype, Multimedia Messenger, and Google talk for group conferences. There are many applications where learners could connect with friends, other students, teachers, and even native speakers to enhance their language learning. These ways of internet learning have been observed to improve the oral proficiency of the learners and enhance intercultural awareness, and motivation, and raise the attitude toward interaction. The internet is the ready reckoner for learners and finds a lot of learning materials, for instance, audio, video, radio voice recordings, quizzes, podcasts, etc. Through this internet, the learners get exposed to a great number of language materials and exercise with answers to develop their speaking skills.

### **iv) TELL**

(TELL) or Technology-enhanced language learning deals with the impact of technology on teaching and learning a second language. This technology is used in computers including hardware, software, and the internet to enhance the learning of English languages. It allows the learners to reach all the technologies available for the learning and augmentation of the English language. Learners easily access to use online dictionaries, chat, and view the various strategies of learning around the world.

### **v) Pod Casting**

A **podcast** is an episodic series of digital audio with spoken word files that a user can download to a personal device or computer to listen to at his/her convenient time. This podcasting service provides a convenient and integrated way to manage a personal consumption queue across many podcast sources. Podcasts can upload or download audio files to help the learner familiarize themselves with the target language. Learners can use them as audio materials that can be used in teams for activities like presentations, group discussions, and other speaking skills. On the web, there are certain podcasts that are for language learners and these can include pronunciation, meaning, accent, and intonation for the particular needs of students. It has audio files in which learners can feed their own materials and play them inside and outside of the classroom. It works as an i-pods which helps to hear the favorite music files downloaded from various sources of the internet. In the same way, learners can have their education files in the form of audio files which allows students to use their tech-based systems for educational purposes. But it doesn't create an atmosphere to move away from the traditional face-to-face training and never lose the student-to-trainer relationship. Through this, students and teachers can share information and subject materials with anyone at any time. The recorded lessons can be downloaded from the podcast by the students and able to access the missed lectures. Some Online Resources for ELT Podcasting: Podcasting Basics: Examples of radio stations that provide podcasts. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/> (BBC) and <http://www.rthk.org.hk/> (RTHK).

#### **vi) Internet References for Speaking skill**

There are a few best apps for learning vocabulary with meaning and Example sentences and some other apps are there to train grammar and sentence formation with self-test options. Few apps specially to train the brainstorming and discussion techniques. The following apps may attract the learner to satisfy their expectation.

**Busuu** is the app that teaches how a word sounds and explains the meaning with an example sentence for each one. It covers the vocabulary of business, travel, and Economist. It also tests as fill up the gaps and yes or no questions and provides the test feedback with suggestions.

**Memrise** offers meaning and example sentences with the translation of a selected language. There are also Immerse videos in memrise which are interesting like Instagram and Reels.

**LinGo Play** is suitable for beginners which makes learning the word with the flashcard. It also has a provision to listen to the pronunciation. Tests are given to check spelling or listening activities.

**WordReference** provides the reader, word with multiple accurate translations. In addition to that, it offers an example sentence in both languages. This app is excellent to know about the vocabulary of colloquial words, slang, synonyms, and collocations.

**Word of the Day** offers advanced English words for the specified context who looks for challenging and **clever** words. It also provides a word daily with complete definitions and a whole database.

**Forvo** is the largest pronunciation reference online. Its goal is to compile native-speaker pronunciations for all the words that exist in the world, including names. It also compiles phrases in each of the languages available in the web. It provides the words which are politely pronounced and talks about the dictionary name. Pronunciations that are unnecessarily emotive will be removed. In addition, those onomatopoeias, and words with 40 letters are not allowed as words.

**Bubbl.us** is a web-based mind-mapping app that allows students to build, save, and share up to three mind maps on the free plan. It makes it easy to start brainstorming in group conferences from any type of smart device. Those ideas can be converted into useful presentations.

**Coggle** is the tool that allows creating and sharing of intricate mind maps from complex brainstorming to simple ideation. This Coggle tool provides a space where students can build and download diagrams so that their ideas will always be accessible and feasible.

**Lucid Chart** offers a powerful and easy-to-make flow chart that helps to create professional diagrams with special provision for visual collaboration. It can be started from scratch, or picked from their variety of templates.

**Mind Map** is a Google Chrome extension that has Cloud, Google Drive, Dropbox, and Box support all built-in. Save the work to local storage, in the cloud, or print and export finished mind maps as an image. Even attach URLs or hand-drawn images to the individual nodes.

**Smart Vocabulary** is an app aimed at growing and refining a student's range of vocabulary in preparation for college entrance tests and anybody who would like to expand their knowledge of rare/ unfamiliar words can be learned from it.

**VoiceThread** is the best app for group discussion practice. This tool can be used by anyone by creating a free registration account. With VoiceThread, helps the member to share group conversations from one place to another all over the world. This sharing of conversation can be done without installing any software. It has multimedia slide shows

which can accommodate images, documents, and videos. People are allowed to navigate pages and give comments in 5 types voice, text, an audio file, or video. VoiceThreads can even be embedded to show and receive comments on other websites and exported to MP3 players or DVDs to play as archival movies.

### **Conclusion:**

Modern technologies of language tools make the learning time more dynamic and any number of repetitions of the learning process is possible. There are ample opportunities to practice and correct mistakes. The learners can use worldwide resources for them to gain sound knowledge and skills of the language. Good learning happens when the learners have the opportunity to think in their own way in the process of learning and this is possible by the modern technologies in their available time. There are great apps available for users which allow learners to exercise the language activities with just a click on them. Technology has changed the way to think and learn. Adapting to technology usage is definitely the way forward in English learning which makes the learners produce as many sentences as possible to express their ideas. It makes it possible to practice the nuances of tone modulation, varied country accents, and the native speakers' expressions with body language.

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