

Innovative Teaching with TELL: Enhancing Speaking Skills through Digital Applications

Miftahul Jannah^{1*}, Dhea Nuraisyah², Sumarni³, Helli Ramdannah Liswati⁴, Zaitun Qamariah⁵

^{1,2,3,4} Institut Agama Islam Negeri Palangka Raya, Indonesia

Email: miftahuljannah1490@gmail.com¹, dheanuraisyah0@gmail.com², sumarniimar10@gmail.com³, helliramdhaniah@gmail.com⁴, zaitun.qamariah@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id⁵

Alamat Kampus: jl. G. Obos, kel. Menteng, kec. Jekan Raya, Kota Palangka Raya

*Korespondensi penulis: miftahuljannah1490@gmail.com

Abstract. *The ability to speak effectively is an essential component of language proficiency, yet it remains one of the most challenging skills for learners to master. This study investigated the role of Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools, such as Duolingo, Zoom, ELSA Speak and YouTube, in improving speaking among language learners. Using desk research, findings show that these tools significantly improve learners' pronunciation, fluency and engagement. For example, Duolingo systematically improves vocabulary and skill development, while ELSA Speak provides real-time pronunciation feedback. Zoom facilitates interactive group discussions through breakout rooms, and YouTube encourages self-directed learning by exposing learners to authentic language content. Despite the benefits, challenges such as limited internet access and suitability of the tools for advanced learners remain. These findings suggest that strategically integrating multiple TELL tools can maximize speaking proficiency outcomes. Future research should explore the long-term impact and cross-context applicability of these tools in language learning.*

Keywords: *Speaking Skills, Duolingo, ELSA Speak, Zoom, YouTube.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as a skill that reflects an individual's proficiency in a specific language (Fitria et al., 2023). As a fundamental part of daily life, speaking activities play a crucial role and should not be underestimated (Sudarmo, 2021). However, among all language skills, speaking is often reported to be the most anxiety-inducing for learners (Bashori et al., 2022). This highlights the need for proper support and innovative teaching methods to help students overcome such challenges. The development of speaking skills involves several complex factors, including learning readiness, cognitive readiness, motivation, and guidance (Baron, 2020). Therefore, classroom management and well-structured speaking instruction are vital to enhancing students' speaking abilities (Miranda & Wahyudin, 2023). To address the challenges associated with learning to speak, consistent practice and effective teaching techniques are essential (Karpovich et al., 2021). Moreover, leveraging suitable learning media has been shown to significantly improve speaking skills, as it provides students with engaging and interactive ways to practice (Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022).

In this context, technology has emerged as a valuable tool in teaching speaking, particularly in the realm of English as a foreign language (Sosas, 2021). The use of mobile

devices with wireless internet access enables students to engage with multimedia materials, reflect on their performance, and collaborate with peers more effectively (Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022). Technologies like CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) have also been developed to further support EFL learners in mastering speaking skills (Terzioğlu & Kurt, 2022). Various digital platforms and applications have proven effective in facilitating speaking practice. For instance, TikTok, a popular tool among Generation Z, offers a modern and interactive medium that enhances students' learning experiences (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). Additionally, applications such as Duolingo have been shown to improve both students' speaking abilities and their vocabulary knowledge (Fitria et al., 2023). Research has also demonstrated a link between scores on the Duolingo English Test (DET) and stakeholders' evaluations of students' speaking performances (Isbell et al., 2024). Similarly, the ELSA Speak application has been successful in improving students' pronunciation and motivation by enabling them to replicate native-like sounds, further highlighting the impact of such tools on speaking proficiency (Kholis, 2021; Aswaty & Indari, 2022).

Despite the availability of these technologies, a common obstacle faced by foreign language learners remains inadequate vocabulary, which is often associated with lower speaking proficiency (Sosas, 2021). Addressing this issue requires not only the use of appropriate teaching methods but also the integration of technology and innovative approaches to make learning speaking skills more effective and engaging. However, despite the wide range of available technologies, there is a noticeable lack of research exploring how Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) tools specifically contribute to improving speaking skills. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further studies to understand the effectiveness of TELL in enhancing learners' speaking abilities. Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by investigating whether the use of TELL tools can significantly improve speaking skills among language learners. By focusing on this topic, we hope to provide valuable insights into how technological tools can be effectively integrated into language instruction to support speaking proficiency development.

2. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The application of tech in foreign languages especially oral skills intersects with the sociocultural interaction theory which considers the use of tools as crucial in learning through social participation (Kozyreva et al., 2020; Mukherjee et al., 2024). Application based on voice and video functions enable learners to be mediated during learning and also interact with the original speakers, but this is not the limit, as they can also study autonomously

(Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018). Additionally, the multimedia learning theory posits that communication of content in pictures and sounds is likely to achieve better results (Sclater & Lally, 2018). These technologies help not only to practice the speaking aspect, but also are useful for the synthesis of speech sound and development of automatic speech skills (Li & Walsh, 2023).

Prior studies emphasize the importance of technology in the development of speaking skills (Asratie et al., 2023). The availability of mobile applications and web platforms allows learners to perform speaking practice anytime (Bai & Xian, 2024). A study emphasizes the need for synchronous instruments like Zoom to facilitate live communication with the language community, while asynchronous instruments like voice recording enable learners to reflect on the speaking skills (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024). Using digital technologies for collaborative work, eg. project-based simulations, allows designing a learning environment for students' speaking skills in conditions of proper interaction (Perry, 2024).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach through which it undertakes the library research method to review the employment of digital tools in speaking activities within the process of language learning (Amiroh & Admoko, 2020; Widhi et al., 2021). The analysis is conducted through a qualitative description to examine the various digital tools, focusing on their advantages, disadvantages, and effectiveness in enhancing speaking skills, as demonstrated in the research Hanikah (2022). The validity of the data is ensured through triangulation by comparing various references. It also follows the ethics of research through proper citations and avoidance of copyright material. The methodology is anticipated to give a comprehensive understanding of digital tools supporting language learning and some recommendations for teachers on how best to apply technology (Marshalsey & Sclater, 2018).

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study used library research to examine findings from various studies on the effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) tools in improving speaking skills. The results provide insights into how tools like Duolingo, Zoom, ELSA Speak, and YouTube have helped students enhance their speaking abilities.

1. Effectiveness of Digital Tools for Enhancing Speaking Skills

Digital tools such as Duolingo, Zoom, ELSA Speak, and YouTube were found to play significant roles in improving students' speaking skills. Duolingo, for example, offered structured exercises to build vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and develop fluency. According to Nur Hanifah & Harsul Lisan (2024), Rahmawati, (2024) reported that learners who used Duolingo showed notable improvements in their speaking abilities, with consistent progress in pronunciation and grammar. ELSA Speak, designed to provide real-time feedback on pronunciation, helped students focus on intonation, stress, and accurate articulation. Anggraini (2022) found that learners using ELSA Speak saw consistent improvements across three cycles of learning, with scores increasing from an average of 70 in the first cycle to 80 in the final cycle. Zoom was highlighted for its interactive features, such as breakout rooms, which allowed learners to practice speaking in small groups. Fitriani Guci & Siahaan (2021) showed that students using Zoom better than traditional settings, because zoom more engaging and collaborative design. YouTube added another dimension by providing access to diverse video content, such as debates and tutorials. Wahyuni & Utami (2021) emphasized that students who practiced speaking through YouTube videos not only gained confidence but also improved their pronunciation and fluency by imitating native speakers. Moreover, these platforms allowed learners to access content anytime and anywhere, making the learning process more flexible and adaptable to individual needs.

2. Learner Engagement and Motivation

One of the key benefits of using TELL tools was the increased motivation and engagement among learners. Duolingo, with its gamified structure, kept learners consistently interested by rewarding progress with points and badges Nur Hanifah & Harsul Lisan (2024). Similarly, ELSA Speak motivated students by offering personalized feedback and tracking their progress, which made learning more interactive and enjoyable (Anggraini, 2022). Zoom created opportunities for collaborative learning, which encouraged participation and helped learners overcome their fear of speaking. Risma (2021) noted that activities like role-playing in Zoom breakout rooms fostered engagement and allowed learners to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Meanwhile, YouTube provided students with opportunities to practice listening and speaking simultaneously, which helped them stay engaged in their learning process

(Wahyuni & Utami, 2021). The combination of visual and auditory inputs on YouTube enhanced their ability to mimic and understand language nuances effectively.

3. Pedagogical Advantages and Innovations

Integrating digital tools into teaching strategies introduced new methods for enhancing speaking skills. Zoom supported real-time interaction, allowing educators to conduct live discussions and activities (Fitriani Guci & Siahaan 2021). ELSA Speak focused on improving pronunciation through targeted exercises, making it particularly useful for students struggling with specific sounds or intonation patterns (Anggraini, 2022). YouTube enabled self-directed learning, where students could choose videos that suited their interests and practice speaking by mimicking native speakers. This flexibility helped cater to diverse learning preferences and encouraged independent learning (Wahyuni & Utami, 2021). Duolingo, with its structured curriculum, provided a foundation for learners to build their speaking skills systematically (Rahmawati, 2024). By combining these tools, educators could create a flexible approach to teaching that addressed both basic and advanced speaking skills.

4. Challenges and Limitations

While TELL tools offered significant benefits, they also came with challenges. Limited access to reliable internet and devices was a common issue, especially in underprivileged areas (Iberahim et al., 2023). Prolonged use of platforms like Zoom could lead to fatigue, affecting learners' motivation and focus (Putri & Suryaman, 2022). Jiang et al. (2021) was found that some tools, like Duolingo, were more effective for beginners but less suited for advanced learners who required spontaneous speaking practice. Similarly, while ELSA Speak provided excellent pronunciation feedback, it relied heavily on learners having access to quiet environments and high-quality microphones (Anggraini, 2022). Addressing these limitations requires a balanced approach, combining technology with traditional teaching methods to create a more comprehensive learning experience. Moreover, it is crucial to train both educators and learners on the effective use of these tools to maximize their potential benefits.

Discussion

In this study highlighted that speaking was a language skill reflecting an individual's proficiency in a particular language (Fitria et al., 2023). However, speaking was often regarded as the most anxiety-inducing skill among learners (Bashori et al., 2022). Therefore, innovative teaching methods and effective learning media were considered necessary to address these challenges (Sudarmo, 2021). One proposed solution involved the use of technology, such as CALL and popular applications among younger generations, like TikTok and Duolingo, to provide interactive learning experiences (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021; Fitria et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the introduction identified a research gap concerning the specific contributions of TELL tools in improving speaking skills, which this study aimed to address.

In the result, findings from various studies demonstrated how specific TELL tools such as Duolingo, ELSA Speak, Zoom, and YouTube significantly enhanced students' speaking skills. For instance, Duolingo helped build vocabulary, improved pronunciation, and developed fluency through structured exercises (Nur Hanifah & Harsul Lisan, 2024; Rahmawati, 2024) ELSA Speak, which provided real-time feedback, was effective in improving students' pronunciation by focusing on accurate articulation and intonation (Anggraini 2022). Meanwhile, Zoom, with its breakout room feature, enabled small group speaking practice, fostering collaboration and student engagement (Fitriani Guci & Siahaan., 2021). YouTube added value by offering diverse video content, such as debates and tutorials, which helped students mimic native speakers to enhance fluency and pronunciation (Wahyuni & Utami ., 2021). This section also emphasized that these tools not only improved speaking skills but also boosted student motivation, as seen in Duolingo's gamified structure and ELSA Speak's personalized feedback (Nur Hanifah & Harsul Lisan, 2024; Rahmawati. 2024).

Although these technologies provided significant benefits, the researcher also found the challenges, such as limited access to reliable internet and devices, fatigue from prolonged Zoom usage, and the need for conducive environments for tools like ELSA Speak (Putri & Suryaman, 2022; Anggraini, 2022). Therefore, this study underscored the necessity of a balanced approach that integrated technology with traditional teaching methods to create a more comprehensive and inclusive learning experience.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This research shows that the use of technology in speaking skills learning, such as Duolingo, ELSA Speak, Zoom, and YouTube, can significantly improve students' pronunciation, fluency, and motivation. These findings highlight the importance of integrating technology-based strategies in language teaching to create an interactive and engaging learning experience. However, obstacles such as limited internet access and fatigue from prolonged technology use are still challenges that need to be overcome. This study recommends a balanced learning approach, blending technology with traditional teaching methods, to maximize learning outcomes. Future research also needs to explore the long-term impact of using these tools as well as their applicability across different learning contexts to increase the validity of the findings.

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