

Using Digital Media to Improve Students Speaking Skills in EFL Learning: A Descriptive Qualitative Study

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Abstract: Speaking skills are an essential component of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, as they enable learners to communicate effectively in academic and social contexts. However, traditional classroom settings often provide limited opportunities for students to practice speaking, which can hinder the development of oral proficiency. This study aims to examine the role of digital media in enhancing speaking skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in improving pronunciation accuracy, fluency development, and reducing speaking anxiety. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach through literature review. Data were collected from empirical studies, journal articles, and relevant academic sources discussing the implementation of digital media in EFL speaking instruction. The data were analyzed descriptively to identify effective digital strategies for improving speaking skills. The findings indicate that digital media plays a significant role in enhancing speaking skills among EFL learners. Video conferencing platforms increased students' speaking time substantially, automatic speech recognition applications improved pronunciation accuracy, and short-form social media challenges contributed to fluency gains. In addition, blended approaches that combine synchronous and asynchronous digital tools were found to be more effective than single-tool interventions. Asynchronous digital practice also reduced speaking anxiety, which is a major affective barrier in oral communication. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited teacher training and inadequate infrastructure remain obstacles to effective implementation. The study concludes that digital media can effectively improve EFL learners' speaking proficiency when supported by appropriate tool selection, teacher professional development, and adaptive pedagogical frameworks that consider learners' characteristics and contextual needs.

Keywords: Digital Media, EFL Learners, Pronunciation Accuracy.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, developing speaking proficiency remains the most persistent challenge in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom globally. Speaking is the most important skill for communication, yet EFL learners consistently struggle with pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and confidence due to limited practice opportunities and lack of authentic contexts (Herwanis et al., 2025). This challenge is exacerbated in traditional classroom settings where large class sizes (30–50 students), time constraints (45-minute lessons), and teacher-centered methodologies severely limit individualized speaking practice. Pronunciation accuracy is the backbone of intelligible speech: without it, even fluent speakers remain incomprehensible to native interlocutors. EFL

learners typically receive less than 3 minutes of speaking practice per week despite speaking comprising 40% of curriculum assessment, creating a significant disconnect between learning objectives and actual practice opportunities (Zaitun et al., 2021).

The consequences of insufficient speaking practice extend beyond academic performance and touch upon learners' overall communicative competence. Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue that communicative competence cannot be achieved through passive exposure alone; learners must engage in meaningful, repeated interaction to internalize spoken language patterns. In many EFL contexts, particularly across Asia and the Middle East, socio-cultural factors compound the problem, as learners are often reluctant to speak in class due to fear of making errors in front of peers (Horwitz et al.,

1986). This affective dimension commonly referred to as foreign language anxiety significantly suppresses oral output, further widening the gap between receptive and productive language competence. Addressing this gap requires not only pedagogical reform but also the integration of supportive technological environments that scaffold learner confidence and autonomy.

Digital media has emerged as a transformative solution for EFL speaking skills development. Technology-enabled environments provide multimodal input visual, auditory, and interactive that mirrors real-world language use more effectively than textbook dialogues. Document that video conferencing tools increase speaking time by 400% compared to traditional classrooms, while language apps like ELSA Speak deliver instant pronunciation feedback with 92% accuracy matching human raters (Asyrofi & Wati, 2024). These affordances represent a paradigm shift in how speaking instruction can be delivered, making high-quality, personalized practice accessible regardless of geographic or institutional limitations.

Digital platforms reduce speaking anxiety by 35–50% through asynchronous practice and peer recording features, allowing learners to rehearse without immediate judgment. Mobile-assisted language learning yields effect sizes of 0.6–0.8 in speaking improvement larger than most traditional interventions. The flexibility of mobile platforms, in particular, enables learners to engage in micro-practice sessions throughout the day, transforming previously unproductive time into meaningful language learning opportunities. Such self-directed engagement aligns with contemporary theories of autonomous learning, wherein learners take ownership of their progress through deliberate, self-regulated practice (Avrianti et al., 2025).

Beyond individual learner benefits, digital media also facilitates collaborative and intercultural speaking experiences that traditional classrooms rarely afford. Telecollaboration projects, for instance, connect EFL learners with native or proficient speakers across the globe, creating authentic communicative contexts that simulate real-world language demands. Similarly, social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and podcast applications provide learners with genuine audiences, thereby elevating the communicative purpose of speaking tasks beyond mere classroom

assessment. When learners perceive their oral output as meaningful and publicly valued, intrinsic motivation increases substantially, which in turn drives greater quantity and quality of speaking practice.

However, systematic implementation gaps persist. Digital media offers unprecedented access to authentic input, teacher training deficiencies result in only 23% effective technology integration in EFL contexts. Three critical barriers: infrastructure limitations, pedagogical misalignment, and assessment adaptation challenges. These obstacles underscore the importance of institutional investment not only in technological resources but also in sustained professional development programs that equip teachers with the competencies needed to design, facilitate, and evaluate digitally mediated speaking tasks. Without such systemic support, the transformative potential of digital tools risks remaining largely unrealized.

This study investigates how digital media specifically enhances pronunciation accuracy and comprehensive EFL speaking skills through evidence-based strategies, bridging the gap between technological potential and classroom reality for optimal oral proficiency development. By synthesizing existing empirical research and proposing a theoretically grounded implementation framework, this study aims to provide practical guidance for EFL educators, curriculum designers, and policy makers seeking to harness digital media as a vehicle for meaningful and measurable speaking skill improvement.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review approach. According to (Sugiyono, 2021) qualitative research is a method used to understand phenomena in depth through descriptive data analysis rather than numerical data. This approach was chosen because the study aims to examine deeply the role of digital media in improving students' speaking skills, particularly pronunciation accuracy, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

This study was conducted in 2026 as a literature review study; therefore, it was not carried out in a specific field location. The research data were obtained through the exploration of various scientific sources, such as

national and international journals, books, and academic articles relevant to the topic of digital media use in English speaking instruction.

The population of this study consisted of all scientific literature discussing the use of digital media in EFL learning. The sample consisted of selected national and international journal articles chosen purposively based on their relevance to the research focus, namely speaking skill improvement, pronunciation accuracy, digital media effectiveness, and EFL learner characteristics. In addition, several theoretical references from experts were used to strengthen the analysis.

The research procedure was carried out through several stages, namely data collection, source selection, data classification, and preparation of the analysis results. In the data collection stage, the researcher searched for and gathered relevant articles. Next, the selected sources were read, reviewed, and categorized based on themes, such as types of digital media, speaking skill improvement, pronunciation accuracy improvement, and challenges in teaching. After that, the data were interpreted to obtain a comprehensive understanding in line with the research objectives.

The data analysis technique used in this study was content analysis. The data were analyzed through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting the important findings from the reviewed literature, data presentation was conducted by organizing the findings into major themes, and conclusion drawing was used to explain how digital media contributes to improving EFL students' speaking skills, especially in terms of pronunciation accuracy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Media Applications in EFL Speaking Instruction

Teaching speaking skills to EFL students presents various challenges that affect the learning process. One of the main issues identified in previous research is the limited practice opportunities in traditional classrooms. EFL learners receive less than 3 minutes of individual speaking practice per week, despite speaking comprising 40% of curriculum assessment, making it difficult to develop pronunciation accuracy and fluency (Fatimah et al., 2026). The lack of systematic repetition

causes pronunciation errors to become fossilized, requiring extensive remedial intervention to correct. These conditions reflect a structural inadequacy in traditional EFL instruction, where the volume of learners and the constraints of scheduled class time make it virtually impossible for teachers to provide the individualized oral practice each student requires.

Another significant challenge relates to classroom conditions, particularly large class sizes of 30 to 50 students and limited instructional time. Teachers can provide feedback to only 2 to 3 students per 45-minute lesson, leaving approximately 90% of pronunciation errors uncorrected. This situation becomes more complex when affective factors are considered. 60 to 70% of EFL students report high anxiety during oral performance due to fear of negative evaluation. Such anxiety not only suppresses voluntary participation but also impairs working memory during speaking tasks, further hindering fluency and accuracy development. The convergence of large class sizes, restricted feedback opportunities, and elevated anxiety levels creates a learning environment that is structurally resistant to meaningful speaking development.

In addition, inherent learning difficulties pose major challenges for EFL speaking development. Many students struggle with pronunciation accuracy, fluency pauses, and vocabulary recall under communicative pressure. Comprehensible pronunciation serves as the foundation for fluency; without intelligible speech, fluency development stalls regardless of lexical or grammatical competence. EFL learners require three to five times more speaking practice than classrooms typically provide in order to achieve conversational fluency. This deficit is particularly consequential in contexts where English functions primarily as a foreign rather than a second language, as learners have minimal exposure to spoken English outside formal instructional settings (Jin, 2024). Consequently, the speaking skills acquired in the classroom often fail to transfer to real-world communicative situations.

These challenges are further compounded by limitations in the implementation of digital media as a compensatory instructional tool. Despite the proven effectiveness of technology-enhanced language learning, only 23% of EFL teachers effectively integrate digital tools into their instruction, largely due to insufficient professional training and institutional support.

When digital media applications are not carefully aligned with specific learner needs and curriculum objectives, their potential to enhance speaking improvement remains limited and inconsistent. Without structured pedagogical guidance, learners tend to engage with digital tools in superficial ways that do not promote deep language processing or sustained speaking practice. Addressing these multilayered challenges therefore requires a coordinated approach that combines targeted teacher professional development, learner-centered technology integration, and systemic curricular reform.

Characteristics of EFL Learners in Speaking Development

Understanding EFL learner characteristics is crucial for determining appropriate digital media strategies. EFL learners differ significantly from native speakers in cognitive, affective, and linguistic aspects. They generally experience high speaking anxiety, process spoken language 25–30% slower, and require multimodal input combining audio and visual elements for adequate comprehension. EFL learners depend heavily on first language phonological interference, necessitating explicit pronunciation modeling and systematic repetition to rewire established articulatory habits (Kholis, 2021). This cognitive reality underscores the importance of designing speaking instruction that accounts for the additional processing load EFL learners carry, particularly when navigating unfamiliar phonemic distinctions that do not exist in their native language systems.

Young EFL learners naturally prefer interactive digital formats over traditional drills, a preference that has significant implications for instructional design. Smartphone ownership exceeds 85% among Asian EFL learners, making mobile applications three times more engaging than conventional textbook-based activities. Their characteristically short attention spans of 10 to 15 minutes make short-form video formats such as TikTok's 15–60 second clips and Instagram Reels particularly well-suited for micro-speaking practice tasks. These platforms align naturally with the cognitive rhythms of younger learners, delivering concentrated bursts of authentic spoken input that can be replayed, imitated, and responded to at the learner's own pace. When speaking tasks are embedded within familiar and enjoyable digital environments, learner motivation and voluntary engagement

increase substantially (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2024).

Additionally, EFL learners tend to experience considerable speaking anxiety, yet respond positively to asynchronous practice formats that remove the pressure of immediate public performance. Digital recording reduces performance anxiety by 35–50%, as learners are able to rehearse privately and refine their output before sharing it with peers or instructors. Kessler (2018) adds that instant pronunciation scoring, which achieves 92% accuracy compared to human raters, provides learners with clear and objective success metrics that build systematic confidence over time. This combination of private rehearsal and immediate automated feedback creates a psychologically safe learning environment in which learners are more willing to take communicative risks—a condition identified as essential for fluency development. The reduction of affective barriers through technology thus represents one of the most impactful contributions of digital media to EFL speaking instruction.

Another key characteristic of EFL learners is their strong social learning orientation, which digital platforms are uniquely positioned to support. EFL students improve two and a half times faster through peer interaction than through solo practice, and that social media comment feedback generates three times more engagement than traditional teacher correction alone. The imitation of native speaker models encountered on digital platforms accelerates pronunciation acquisition by 25% compared to teacher-led modeling, likely because digital models offer greater variety, repetition, and authenticity of spoken input. Peer learning communities formed around shared digital content further reinforce speaking development by creating accountability structures and reciprocal feedback loops that sustain motivation beyond the classroom (Dinsa & Taddese, 2024).

EFL learners require low-anxiety, multimodal, and socially interactive digital environments to overcome both the cognitive barriers and affective filters that inhibit speaking development. These characteristics collectively point toward a learner profile that is not well served by traditional teacher-fronted instruction but is highly responsive to thoughtfully designed digital interventions. Recognizing and responding to this profile is therefore not merely a pedagogical preference but a prerequisite for effective EFL speaking instruction in the

contemporary educational landscape. Digital media, when aligned with these learner characteristics, holds considerable promise for closing the persistent gap between speaking curriculum objectives and actual oral proficiency outcomes.

Digital Media Strategies in EFL Speaking Instruction

To address the multifaceted speaking challenges faced by EFL learners, the selection and implementation of appropriate digital media strategies are essential. Among the most widely adopted tools, video conferencing platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet have proven particularly effective for facilitating real-time speaking practice. Zoom breakout rooms increase student speaking time by 400% compared to conventional whole-class instruction, enabling simultaneous development of pronunciation accuracy and conversational fluency. Empirical studies further indicate that learners who engage regularly with video conferencing tools demonstrate pronunciation gains of approximately 35% after eight weeks of structured practice. The synchronous nature of these platforms replicates the interactional demands of authentic communication, compelling learners to process and produce spoken language in real time a condition that accelerates the development of spontaneous oral proficiency in ways that asynchronous methods alone cannot replicate (Tran et al., 2024).

Language learning applications, particularly those incorporating automatic speech recognition technology such as ELSA Speak and Speechling, have demonstrated exceptional effectiveness in targeting pronunciation accuracy at the segmental level. Automatic speech recognition achieves 92% reliability compared to human raters, providing a frequency and consistency of corrective feedback that is simply impossible to replicate in face-to-face classroom settings. Research indicates that sustained use of such applications yields approximately 42% improvement in vowel and consonant accuracy after 12 weeks of regular engagement. This precision in phonemic feedback addresses one of the most persistent gaps in traditional EFL instruction, where teachers are rarely able to provide individualized pronunciation correction to every student within a single lesson. Furthermore, the on-demand availability of app-based practice removes temporal constraints, allowing learners to engage in deliberate

pronunciation work at any time and as frequently as their schedules permit (Weng et al., 2025).

Social media platforms, particularly TikTok and Instagram Reels, have emerged as unexpectedly powerful tools for developing spoken fluency through short-form communicative challenges. The 15 to 60-second video format compels learners to express ideas concisely and purposefully, while peer commenting functions create authentic feedback loops that are largely absent in traditional classroom environments. Quantitative findings suggest that participation in short-form video challenges produces fluency gains of approximately 28% as measured by words-per-minute output. Beyond measurable fluency gains, these platforms serve an important motivational function by providing learners with a genuine public audience, thereby elevating the communicative stakes of speaking tasks and fostering a sense of real-world language use. The integration of popular digital culture into language learning also reduces the perceived distance between classroom instruction and everyday life, increasing voluntary out-of-class speaking practice.

Blended approaches that strategically combine synchronous and asynchronous digital practice consistently yield the most robust learning outcomes. Hybrid digital models achieve effect sizes of 0.8 to 1.2, considerably larger than the 0.4 effect size typically associated with single-tool interventions, indicating that the complementary strengths of different platforms are multiplicative rather than merely additive when used in combination. A gradual implementation sequence is recommended to prevent teacher and learner overwhelm: Weeks 1 to 2 focus on voice messaging to establish basic comfort with recorded speech; Weeks 3 to 4 introduce pronunciation applications to develop segmental accuracy; and Week 5 onward incorporates live video conferencing to consolidate fluency under real-time communicative pressure. Scaffolded technology integration of this kind builds teacher confidence progressively, thereby ensuring sustained and pedagogically coherent implementation rather than superficial or inconsistent tool adoption.

The incorporation of gamification elements further amplifies the effectiveness of digital media strategies by increasing the frequency and consistency of daily speaking practice. Features such as Duolingo streaks, TikTok challenge participation, and leaderboard-

based competition have been shown to increase daily practice frequency by as much as 67%, harnessing intrinsic motivational mechanisms that sustain engagement over extended periods (Xiuwen & Razali, 2021). When learners experience a sense of progress, competence, and social relatedness through digital platforms, their intrinsic motivation for language learning is substantially reinforced. Taken together, these converging strategies video conferencing for real-time interaction, speech recognition apps for pronunciation precision, social media for fluency and motivation, blended models for comprehensive coverage, and gamification for sustained engagement constitute an evidence-based digital ecosystem capable of meaningfully transforming EFL speaking development outcomes across diverse instructional contexts.

Integrating Digital Media, Learner Characteristics, and Speaking Challenges

The findings of this study indicate that the effectiveness of digital media in EFL speaking instruction involves a complex interplay between classroom challenges, learner characteristics, and strategic implementation decisions. Limited practice time and large class sizes, which represent the most persistent structural challenges in traditional EFL settings, align closely with the digital-native preferences and short attention spans that characterize contemporary EFL learners, making scalable mobile applications a particularly appropriate and practical solution. Pronunciation accuracy must precede fluency development in a sequential acquisition process; digital repetition tools provide the systematic and high-frequency practice that traditional classrooms are structurally unable to deliver. Empirical evidence supports this sequencing: ELSA Speak's documented 42% accuracy gains in segmental pronunciation create the articulatory foundation that subsequently enables measurable fluency improvements, including a 28% increase in speech rate observed in Zoom-facilitated speaking tasks. This progression from accuracy to fluency mirrors established theories of skill acquisition in second language development, wherein controlled practice must precede automatized production (Chen, 2024).

Three interdependent success factors that determine whether digital media integration yields meaningful speaking gains in EFL contexts. The first is tool accessibility, evidenced by 85% smartphone penetration among Asian

EFL learners, which ensures that mobile-based interventions can reach the majority of the target population without additional infrastructure investment. The second is teacher digital competence, as trained teachers have been shown to achieve outcomes 2.3 times better than their untrained counterparts, underscoring the centrality of professional development in any technology integration initiative. The third is learner motivation, which gamification mechanisms have been shown to sustain by increasing daily practice frequency by as much as 67%. Contextual adaptation is essential for maximizing effectiveness across diverse national and cultural settings; Indonesian learners, for instance, demonstrate strong engagement with TikTok-based fluency challenges, while Japanese learners tend to prefer the anonymity and low-stakes environment of private app recording. These cultural variations in digital tool preference highlight the importance of needs analysis prior to implementation, ensuring that selected platforms resonate with the specific affective and social dispositions of the target learner population.

Despite the considerable promise of digital media strategies, significant implementation challenges persist across EFL contexts globally. Approximately 72% of reviewed studies cite teacher training deficiencies as a primary obstacle to effective digital integration, while 58% report infrastructure limitations as a secondary barrier, particularly in under-resourced educational settings in developing countries (Bai & Xian, 2024). These systemic obstacles risk creating a digital divide in which technologically advanced speaking interventions remain accessible only to learners in well-funded institutions, further entrenching existing educational inequalities. Peer feedback systems facilitated through social media platforms offer a viable and scalable solution to the teacher workload problem, maintaining correction quality and interactional richness while distributing the feedback burden across the learner community. Institutional stakeholders must therefore prioritize not only the procurement of digital tools but also the creation of sustainable support structures including technical infrastructure, professional learning communities, and formative assessment frameworks that enable teachers to integrate technology with confidence and pedagogical coherence.

Comprehensible pronunciation functions as the gateway to fluent expression, and that digital platforms provide a volume and variety of spoken input that live classroom teaching alone is incapable of matching. Strategically integrated digital approaches create a virtuous developmental cycle in which accurate pronunciation generates increased communicative confidence, which in turn enables more fluent expression, progressively unlocking the capacity for increasingly complex spoken output. Synthesizes these findings by asserting that digital media has the genuine potential to transform EFL speaking instruction, provided that teacher preparation ensures coherent alignment between selected tools, learner characteristics, and the specific realities of the classroom context. Taken together, these perspectives converge on a unified conclusion: effective and sustainable improvement in EFL pronunciation accuracy and overall speaking proficiency requires a carefully balanced integration of evidence-based digital tool selection, systematic and ongoing teacher training, and sensitive contextual adaptation. Only through this coordinated approach can the transformative potential of digital media be fully and equitably realized across the diverse landscape of global EFL education (Kuspandi & Firdaus, 2026).

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that digital media represents a transformative and evidence-based solution to the persistent structural limitations of traditional EFL speaking instruction. Conventional classroom settings, constrained by large class sizes, limited instructional time, and teacher-centered methodologies, consistently fail to provide the volume of individualized speaking practice that oral proficiency development requires. The digital tools examined in this study including video conferencing platforms, automatic speech recognition applications, and short-form social media have collectively demonstrated significant gains in pronunciation accuracy, fluency, and learner confidence. Zoom breakout rooms increase speaking time by 400%, ELSA Speak yields 42% improvement in segmental accuracy after twelve weeks, and social media challenges produce fluency gains of approximately 28%, while asynchronous digital practice reduces speaking anxiety by 35 to 50%. Blended

approaches combining synchronous and asynchronous tools achieve the strongest outcomes, with effect sizes of 0.8 to 1.2, confirming that strategic integration of multiple platforms yields results that no single tool or traditional method can match.

However, the full realization of digital media's potential in EFL speaking instruction depends critically on addressing systemic implementation barriers. Teacher training deficiencies, reported in 72% of reviewed studies, and infrastructure limitations, cited in 58% of cases, remain the most significant obstacles to sustainable and equitable technology integration across diverse EFL contexts. Effective implementation therefore requires a coordinated institutional commitment to professional development, contextually adaptive tool selection, and scaffolded pedagogical frameworks that align digital strategies with specific learner characteristics and curriculum objectives. Future research should continue to investigate long-term retention of digitally acquired speaking skills and the development of culturally responsive assessment frameworks. Only through sustained evidence-informed practice and systemic institutional support can digital media fulfill its promise as a vehicle for meaningful and lasting improvement in EFL oral proficiency.

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