UDC 378.147:811.111:004

DIGITAL PLATFORMS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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In the age of digitalization, in which world society is increasingly taking place digitally, there are fundamental changes occurring in the area of language education. The interactive capability of digital tools is no longer an add-on to the face-to-face classroom but integral in guiding students towards communicative competency. Yet, despite all supplemental materials, the learning of productive skills, especially speaking, is one of the most difficult tasks when it comes to learning a foreign language. Whereas reading and listening are frequently done, at least passively, by means of consumption (intake), oral production engages high-order cognitive skills and real-time processing that few learners find within their reach in classroom settings. Hence, the search for effective digital tools able to fill the discrepancy separating theoretical knowledge and practical fluency is highly relevant.

The purpose of the research is to investigate the possibility of different digital media serving as effective instruments for developing speaking skills in a foreign language. To this end, the research objectives are to determine the psychological and linguistic obstacles to oral communication, organise modern digital platforms by functional features, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of AI-based and interactive tools for fostering communicative confidence.

The research is based on an analysis of academic literature, recent statistical reports, and a comparative review of existing language-learning applications. The methodological framework includes descriptive-analytical methods, synthesis of educational data, and contextual evaluation of digital learning environments.

Developing oral communication skills remains one of the most challenging aspects of language acquisition. According to unofficial data from Cambridge Assessment English, over 60% of respondents identify speaking as the most challenging skill to master. This difficulty stems from various psychological and physiological factors, including fear of making mistakes, the required production speed, and high cognitive load.

These findings are further supported by the EF English Proficiency Index 2025, which highlights that speaking is the weakest English skill in a majority of countries. The research indicates a global stagnation in speaking proficiency, even as reading skills continue to develop rapidly (5, 2025, p. 6). Consequently, many learners with a B2 (Upper-Intermediate) level exhibit an “asymmetrical profile”: while they can comprehend complex academic texts, their spoken language often remains limited to basic A2-level vocabulary.

Several underlying reasons contribute to this imbalance. Most learners primarily encounter English daily through passive reading but rarely engage in active conversation. Furthermore, the majority of digital programs and educational curricula are designed for standardized testing and grammar drills, which are easier to assess, rather than real-world communication. It leads to the problem of "real-time processing": the inability to manage conceptual thought and grammatical accuracy simultaneously during live speech. As a result, learners often translate word-for-word from their native language, leading to unnatural constructions and significant pauses. Scholars have identified several common problems that language learners face when developing speaking skills, including inhibition, lack of ideas, unequal participation, and reliance on the native language (Israilova, 2025). Thus, while the digital environment often encourages passive consumption, speaking demands rigorous active practice.

Digital platforms emerge as a vital solution to these challenges. A virtual learning platform is a crucial digital tool that facilitates online education by means of providing educational content, tracking student progress, and fostering communication between educators and learners [3, p. 45]. Unlike traditional methods, digital tools are adaptable enough to meet the needs of a wide range of learners and to support a broad spectrum of platforms, technologies, and applications. The key advantage of such platforms is regularity. The attractiveness of digital language tools lies in their provision of learners with convenient, on-demand access to language materials, allowing them to practice whenever it suits them and promoting continuous learning (Du, & Daniel, 2024). Unlike traditional methods, by providing an interactive online environment like video lessons, live discussions, and collaborative projects, these platforms boost learners' engagement, creating a dynamic and more immersive educational experience [3, p. 45].

Modern digital platforms can be categorized based on their primary communicative functions:

Human-to-Human Interaction Platforms. Students can easily connect with native speakers worldwide through digital platforms, opening up opportunities for real-time practice and cultural exchange that would be hard to achieve through more conventional means (Yad Ram, 2025). Apps like Busuu, Tandem, and Italki offer a community-based approach where learners can exchange dialogues and receive feedback from native speakers [1].

Video-Based and Repetition Platforms. To help students fully immerse themselves in the language and put what they learn into practice, these platforms offer structured, self-paced language programs that often incorporate multimedia content, cultural background, and real-life scenarios (Yad Ram, 2025). For instance, FluentU utilizes real-world videos with interactive subtitles to bridge the gap between listening and speaking. At the same time, Pimsleur and Mondly focus on speech recognition and spaced repetition to build muscle memory [1].

AI-Powered Platforms. Artificial intelligence chatbots recently caused a stir worldwide by promising to transform education systems in myriad ways, particularly by improving English-language teaching practices. Machine learning allows AI-powered platforms to provide individualized learning experiences by evaluating and providing feedback on a learner's spoken language (Du, & Daniel, 2024). Platforms like Babbel, Gemini, and ChatGPT allow students to practice without the fear of judgment, treating the bot as an honest interlocutor. However, AI also has limitations, such as occasional struggles with diverse accents and a sometimes monotonous interaction style for beginners. Nevertheless, through tools like Quizlet for

vocabulary and Grammarly for structural accuracy, AI enables learners to improve all necessary skills [2].

But at the same time, in their research K. Kugai and M. Vyshnevska draw attention to the fact that despite notable progress in the application of AI-powered platforms, a range of challenges persists. The researchers highlight concerns related to data security, algorithmic bias, and the risk of excessive dependence on technological solutions, which necessitate a cautious and well-regulated approach to integrating AI into educational practice. They also emphasize that sustained human supervision remains essential, as AI applications must be pedagogically grounded and designed in a way that preserves the central role of educators in supporting, guiding, and motivating learners (Kugai, & Vyshnevska, 2025, p. 125).

In conclusion, the study confirms that speaking remains the most challenging skill for language learners worldwide, often stagnating due to difficulties with "real-time processing" and a lack of active practice. The analysis has revealed that digital platforms possess significant potential to address these challenges by providing a low-stress, accessible, and interactive environment for oral production. Whether through human-to-human interaction, video-based immersion, or AI-powered feedback, these tools offer the regularity and engagement that traditional methods often lack.

The prospects for further research lie in the continued integration of adaptive AI technologies, which promise to make language practice even more personalized. Ultimately, the effective use of digital platforms can transform speaking from a daunting task into an achievable goal, fostering a more balanced and confident linguistic profile for modern learners.

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