THE UTILIZATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN LEARNING SPEAKING SKILLS: STUDENTS' PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES AT ISLAMIC SCHOOL

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Abstract: *Effective communication through speaking is a crucial element in today's globalized world. As technology continues to advance, it is essential to incorporate digital tools to enhance and teach speaking skills. An analysis was conducted to investigate the challenges encountered by students while learning English speaking skills through the utilization of digital technologies at an Islamic High School. The study employed a case study methodology with questionnaires and in-depth interviews as data-gathering techniques. The outcomes of this research focused on the student's learning process of English speaking skills, the obstacles they encounter, and the strategies employed to optimize the use of digital technology in acquiring those skills. The demand for curriculum updates and teacher training may contribute to this trend. Urgent changes are needed in English learning to emphasize broader skill development instead of memorizing vocabulary and grammar. Educational institutions should consider these findings and improve English language instruction accordingly.*

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Keywords: *English speaking skills; speaking problems; speaking strategies; digital technology*

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements have become crucial to integrating the digital world with humanity. According to Petrosyan (2022) with over 5 billion people worldwide using the Internet, it has profoundly impacted education. The Internet is a platform for knowledge sharing, revolutionizing teaching and learning. Digital learning management systems have made educational materials more accessible and rendered older methods obsolete, allowing for greater flexibility and engagement.

According to Statista, English is projected to have the largest number of speakers globally in 2022, reaching 1,132 million people. However, having many English speakers does not necessarily mean proficiency in the language. This is also the case in Indonesia, which requires improved English language education despite not being an English-speaking country. The Indonesian government should enhance its English language education programs to address this need.

The question remains whether educators embrace modern teaching methods and receive support to enhance students' learning. Code et al. (2020, p. 2) highlight the significance of technological advancements and the crucial role of teachers in facilitating students' learning. Teacher guidance is essential in helping students develop competency in utilizing digital technology for education. If teachers lack proficiency in digital technology, students may need additional support to navigate and engage with these technologies.

This study benefits English teachers at the senior high school level and the overall body of literature. It sheds light on students' challenges and strategies in learning English speaking skills through modern digital technologies. Unlike many researchers, the study explores the use of multiple digital technologies in speaking practice. This study highlights how the students process and learn English speaking skills using digital technologies, students' problems, and strategies for learning English speaking skills using digital technologies.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Problems in learning English speaking skills

Some students may find it difficult to communicate in a foreign language because it is their second language. One significant obstacle is pronunciation, and several factors can make it challenging. Purwandari (2022, p. 22) identifies four main challenges in promoting foreign language speaking among students: shyness, lack of content, insufficient engagement, and using their first language instead of the target language.

Strategies in learning English speaking skills

Language learners know and intentionally utilize language learning strategies to assimilate new information and accomplish tasks. These strategies aid in improved and efficient comprehension. Consequently, language learning strategies are significant role in achieving success in learning a new language. The speaking techniques Nakatani (2006), categorized into seven distinct groups, are outlined below.

(1) Fluent students focus on rhythm, intonation, pronunciation, and clarity to captivate listeners. (2) The speaker attempts to bargain with the audience and maintain the interaction by updating the message with examples and repeating the speech. (3) Accuracy-oriented English learners focus on articulating their speech and checking for grammatical

accuracy. (4) Compression and modification of messages use similar terms to avoid breakdowns. (5) Nonverbal indicators, such as gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact, are linked to the use of body language in student communication. (6) ESL learners often abandon their messages due to communication difficulties, employing the message abandonment strategy. (7) Thinking in English can be beneficial for language learners who often speak in their second language, as they tend to switch to thinking in English instead of their native language.

As technology continues to evolve, being digitally proficient now requires utilizing technology effectively. Nevertheless, demonstrating the worth of technology in education remains important, particularly in areas with a high emphasis on accountability based on set standards. Moreover, introducing new technologies in classrooms can be costly. According to Karsenti et al. (2020), there are numerous benefits to utilizing digital technologies, such as:

One should be able to fully exploit educational applications on mobile devices and employ them for academic pursuits. This is intended to give learners a basic digital foundation at the beginning of their learning journey for English. As time progresses, students should progressively enhance their proficiency in language skills by utilizing a diverse selection of digital resources, including video production, corpus utilization, foreign language blog animation, and collaborative writing, among other tools.

The present research uncovered various areas of interest and grouped specific categories from previous studies that underline the significance of research in the learning process of English speaking among students. These categories include: 1) Difficulties with English speaking skills (noted in studies by Yendra, 2018; Mufidah, 2017; Suryani et al., 2020; Asworo, 2019), 2) Techniques for enhancing English speaking skills (observed in works by Mufidah, 2017; Angelini & García-Carbonell, 2019; Ikhsaniyah, n.d, 2022), 3) The use of digital technology to develop English speaking skill (highlighted in studies by Utami, 2021; Abbasova & Mammadova, 2019; Nurmala, 2020). Although this study showcases some valuable insights, several weaknesses must be acknowledged. Notably, the research employs more than two digital technologies, which many researchers have not thoroughly explored about their role in enhancing speaking abilities.

METHOD

In the preliminary study, the researcher utilized a questionnaire to the students in an Islamic High School to gather information on whether they use digital technologies to learn English speaking and how often they use digital technologies to learn English speaking. Then, the researcher delivered 30 questionnaires to the 30 students in this step already chosen in the preliminary study because they use digital technologies daily to learn English

speaking skills. The questionnaire data were used to get the data on the students' problems and strategies in learning English speaking skills using digital technologies.

The researcher gathered the data from interviews with ten students who delivered the questionnaire earlier. This phase was carried out to know the students' process in learning English speaking skills and to recognize the difficulties and factors causing the students' speaking skills issues with digital technology.

In the research steps, the researcher identified the students' learning process in learning English speaking skills using digital technologies; this research also found data about the student's problems and strategies in learning English speaking skills using digital technologies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Students process in learning English speaking skills using digital technologies in an Islamic high school

The data was taken from interviews with selected subjects. From the preliminary study, 207 students learn English speaking skills using digital technologies, but every student uses more than one digital technology.
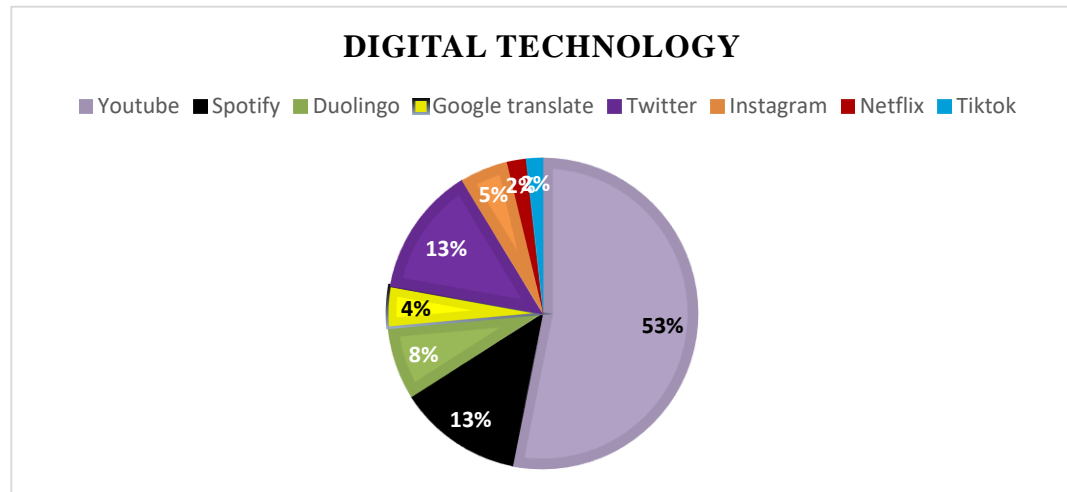

Figure 1. Students who learn English speaking skills using digital technologies

Based on this figure 1 on the preliminary study, there are 189 students (53%) use Youtube, 46 students (13%) use Spotify, 38 students (13%) use Twitter, 27 students (8%) use Duolingo, 18 students (5%) use Instagram, 15 students (4%) use Google Translate, seven students (2%) use Netflix, six students (2%) use Tiktok, to learn English speaking skills. There were nine media that the students used in the process of learning English

speaking skills using digital technologies. The researcher's findings about how the students learn English speaking skills from these media.

Challenges and approaches of students when acquiring English speaking skills through digital technologies at Islamic High School

The data was collected through interviews with specific participants, including questionnaire responses and interviews. The questionnaire was completed by 30 students, while the interviews involved 10 selected subjects.

Table 1. The Students' Problems and Strategies

No.	Problems	Subject
1.	Vocabulary	S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S8, S10
2.	Grammar	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9 S10
3.	Pronunciation	S1, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10
4.	Lack of motivation	S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, S9, S10

Discussion

Based on the research interview with the students. The researcher found how the student's process of learning English speaking skills using digital technologies. The students use media such as social media (Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok), Spotify, online websites, google translate, Duolingo, and Netflix (English movies) to learn English, especially in speaking skills.

The use of social media (Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok) in learning English speaking skills

Social media is a global communication tool and facilitates English language learning. Anwas et al. (2020) found a significant and positive correlation between students' frequency of using English-language social media content and their perceived English proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Figure 1 indicates that YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok are the preferred social media platforms for learning English speaking skills. All 10 selected subjects in the study utilized social media for English-speaking skill acquisition. The process involves:
1. Watching English videos on social media with subtitles,
2. Taking notes on the new vocabulary in their textbooks,
3. Searching for vocabulary using online dictionaries or Google Translate,

4. Memorizing vocabulary acquired from the videos,
5. Practising repetition of dialogues or sentences recently viewed.

Spotify, available on PCs and smartphones, offers a streaming service for music, podcasts, and videos by artists worldwide. It is popular among students, who use it for entertainment while studying, but it can also aid in language learning, particularly for listening skills. Hamsia & Roifah (2023, p. 3) highlight Spotify as a media tool that enhances listening comprehension and energizes students during learning. Among the 10 selected subjects, three (S1, S4, S10) utilize Spotify to learn English speaking skills. The process involves: a) Listening to English-language music and noting new vocabulary and b) Practicing vocabulary pronunciation through repetition.

The use of website in learning English speaking skills

In the digital era, learners are well-acquainted with technology and the internet, enabling them to study English through various online websites. Examples of such websites include Easy World of English, BBC Learning English, and All Things Grammar. Macancela (2019, p. 15) asserts that these websites offer grammar, pronunciation, reading materials, and interactive dictionaries, which benefit students in learning English. Only two of the eight selected subjects (S2, S3) utilize online websites to learn English speaking skills. The process involves: a) Reading English dialogues or texts from online websites, b) Noting down vocabulary c) Practicing vocabulary pronunciation.

The use of Google Translate in learning English speaking skills

Google Translate is a highly popular online translation resource easily accessible with an internet connection. It offers translation services for multiple languages, not just English. According to Alhaisoni & Alhaysony (2017, p. 2), Google Translate is a free tool that enables users to translate text, speech, photos, websites, and even real-time video from one language to another. Among the 10 selected subjects, they all utilize Google Translate to learn English speaking skills. The process involves: a) Searching for vocabulary meanings, b) Writing down and memorizing the vocabulary c) Learning and practising vocabulary pronunciation.

The use of Duolingo in learning English speaking skills

Duolingo is an online platform accessible via PCs or smartphones through an application. According to Garcia, as cited in Kustati (2022, p. 4), Duolingo is a popular digital language learning platform designed like a game. It offers various languages, not just English, and engages learners in progressing through levels. Among the eight selected

subjects, three (S1, S9, S10) utilized Duolingo for English-speaking skill development. The process involves a) Building vocabulary through Duolingo.

The use of English Movies in learning English speaking skills

English movies serve as a valuable medium for students to improve their speaking skills in English. Watching movies not only provides entertainment but also offers enjoyable learning experiences with numerous benefits. *Netflix* is a popular application used by students, particularly for watching English movies with subtitles. According to Sari & Aminatun (2021, p. 2), by watching movies with English subtitles, students can easily grasp pronunciation and imitate it. They can also learn dialogues and intonation. English subtitles aid in comprehending familiar words or phrases. Six of the 10 selected subjects utilized English movies to learn English speaking skills. The process involves a) Watching English movies with subtitles, b) Taking vocabulary notes, c) Memorizing the vocabulary d) Practicing vocabulary repetition.

In summary, students in the digital era can independently learn English using various familiar digital programs. Self-regulated learning can be effective if students are motivated to explore and utilize media for learning. Examples include social media platforms (YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok), Spotify, online websites, Google Translate, Duolingo, and Netflix. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential drawbacks of using digital technologies for English-speaking skill acquisition. Students may easily get distracted by unrelated applications, waste time on social media or movies even with English subtitles, and face challenges in self-regulated learning without immediate teacher support. They may need to wait until they meet their teacher at school, seek information online, or seek assistance from family members.

Grammar

According to Aziz & Kashinathan (2021, p. 5), mastering English speaking skills requires proficiency in multiple areas such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Out of the 30 respondents in the questionnaire, 46.7% acknowledged the difficulty of mastering English speaking skills, 36.7% found it accessible, and 16.7% were unsure. One common issue encountered is difficulty with grammar.

For more explanation, the researchers already explained the following,
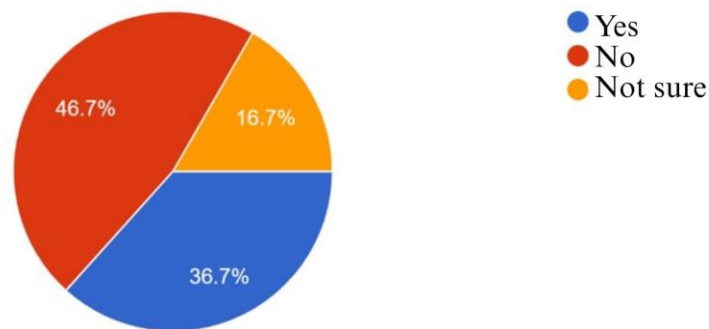
Figure 2. Students' views on English speaking skills are easy to master

According to Figure 2, out of the respondents, 46.7% (14 students) found English speaking skills challenging to master, 36.7% (11 students) considered it accessible, and 16.7% (5 students) were unsure. Additionally, all students acknowledged difficulties with grammar in English speaking skills during the interviews. Strategies for learning English speaking skills in grammar include: utilizing Youtube, taking notes of vocabulary, and reading English sentences. As stated by (Yaniafari et al., 2023, p. 21), using CISAR can improve the students' grammar, since CISAR is a learning media in the form of cards expected to help the first graders of high school improve their speaking and grammar ability.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in effective communication. According to Miralpeix and Munoz (2018, as cited in Bashori et al., 2021), the four language skills heavily rely on vocabulary knowledge. However, many students struggle with vocabulary deficiencies when learning English speaking skills. This hampers their ability to express intended meanings due to limited lexical knowledge or difficulties in utilizing the vocabulary in spoken interactions.

Seven of the 10 selected subjects lack vocabulary when learning English speaking skills through digital technologies. The data from the study participants' interviews reveal their challenges with vocabulary acquisition at home. S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S8, and S10 acknowledge these difficulties. The problems related to vocabulary include a lack of understanding of the meaning and forgetting words. Strategies for learning English speaking skills in vocabulary include a) Utilizing Google Translate and b) Making vocabulary notes.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation plays a crucial role in learning English speaking skills. According to (Yudar et al., 2020, p. 2), it helps students understand and communicate with native and native-like English speakers. In the Questionnaire, 83.3% of the respondents acknowledged that mispronunciation in speaking English could lead to misinterpretation, while 13.3% disagreed and 3.3% were unsure.
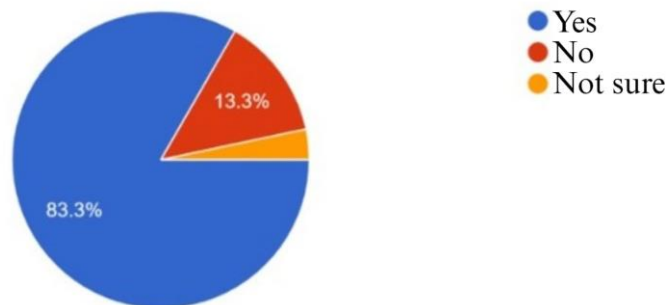

Figure 3. Students' views on mispronunciation in speaking English could lead to misinterpretation

According to Figure 3, 83.3% of the respondents agreed that mispronunciation in speaking English could lead to misinterpretation, while 13.3% disagreed and 3.3% were unsure. Eight subjects (S1, S3, S5, S6, S7, S8, S9, S10) expressed difficulties and uncertainty regarding their pronunciation. The problem with pronunciation includes challenges in pronouncing vocabulary. To improve English speaking skills, there are strategies specifically for pronunciation: a) Utilizing Google Translate and b) Verifying vocabulary pronunciation.

Self-confidence

Self-confidence plays a crucial role in learning English speaking skills, as it affects students' ability to speak in front of others. Students lacking self-confidence may struggle to approach others and experience difficulties speaking English. In the Questionnaire, 53.3% of respondents identified non-linguistic factors (lack of confidence, motivation, shyness, and public speaking anxiety) as the main challenge, while 46.7% identified linguistic factors as the main challenge in speaking English.
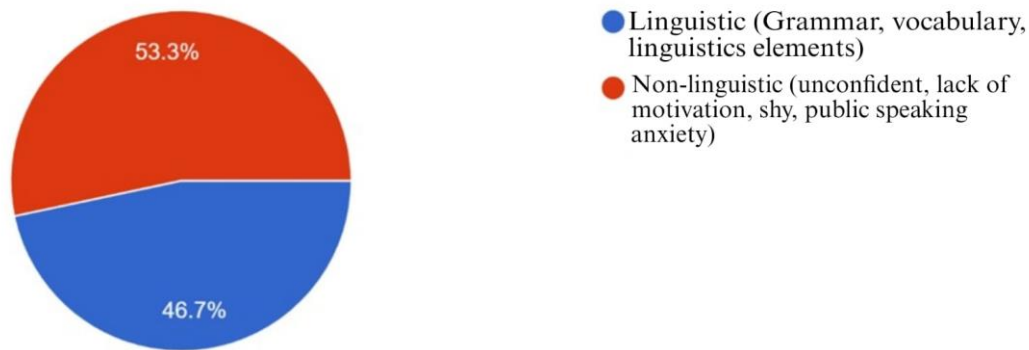
Figure 4. Students' opinions on which are the most prominent problems in speaking English, between linguistics and non-linguistic

According to Figure 4, 16 students (53.3%) identified non-linguistic factors as the main problem in speaking English, while 14 students (46.7%) identified linguistic factors as the main problem. One of the self-confidence issues is the lack of confidence. Strategies for building self-confidence in English speaking skills include strong motivation and consistent practice.

Lack of motivation

Motivation is crucial for successful learning. It enhances students' engagement and learning outcomes. As stated (Handayani & Rabbianty, 2020, p.10), The process begins with English teachers instilling motivation in the students through external and internal factors. However, seven out of ten selected subjects lack the motivation to learn English speaking skills using Digital Technologies. The problems associated with a lack of motivation include laziness, difficulty in self-directed learning, and distractions from other applications.

Strategies for addressing lack of motivation in learning English speaking skills include developing intention and enthusiasm to learn and utilizing YouTube. In conclusion, students facing challenges in English speaking skills can benefit from strategies such as using Google Translate for vocabulary, checking pronunciation accuracy, and learning new vocabulary through YouTube.

CONCLUSION

EFL teachers should embody effective traits identified by students to enhance their teaching effectiveness. They should avoid behaviors that categorize them as ineffective teachers. Students use digital media to improve their English-speaking skills, finding it engaging and user-friendly. They utilize tools like Google Translate for word meanings, note-taking, and pronunciation practice. These resources address challenges in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and motivation. Strategies include language searches,

pronunciation verification, and YouTube for vocabulary. Digital technology helps with motivation, vocabulary gaps, access to materials, and enjoyable learning experiences, preventing boredom in English speaking skill acquisition.

The researchers suggest that EFL teachers update materials and methods, prioritize student engagement over being the center of attention, and use digital technologies to motivate students. Digital technology benefits EFL students by improving vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension. Teachers should motivate students to use digital media for independent learning. Future research should focus on collecting data from teachers on using digital media as a teaching tool for English-speaking instruction.

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