The Impact of Online Learning on Developing Speaking Skills from Students Perspectives: A Case Study on Surman EFL Language and Education Students

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the role of online learning in enhancing students' speaking skills, particularly among students at Surman Language and Education. It also explores the impact of online learning on the speaking skills of foreign language students. In this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches was used. A questionnaire was distributed to 40 participants, revealing that 85% of respondents have utilized online platforms for English speaking practice. Notably, 75% reported participating in live sessions with tutors or peers, indicating a strong engagement with interactive learning. Confidence in speaking English improved for 70% of participants, with 65% acknowledging substantial gains in pronunciation. The majority (80%) expressed satisfaction with their progress, highlighting the effectiveness of online learning tools in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and speaking proficiency. These findings suggest that online learning significantly benefits foreign language students in developing their speaking skills.

Keywords: Online learning, speaking skills, fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary acquisition, interactive learning, digital learning platforms.

ملخص الدراسة

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف تأثير التعلم عبر الإنترنت على تطوير مهارات التحدث لدى طلاب كلية صرمان بفرعيها: اللغات والتربية. تم إجراء استبيان لتقييم تجربة الطلاب وانطباعاتهم. تشير النتائج إلى أن غالبية الطلاب يعتبرون التعلم عبر الإنترنت وسيلة فعالة لتحسين مهاراتهم في التحدث حيث أظهرت البيانات ان 85% من المستجيبين استخدموا منصات عبر الإنترنت لممارسة التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية. ومن الجدير بالذكر أن 75% أفادوا بمشاركتهم في جلسات مباشرة مع المدرسين أو الأقران، مما يشير إلى تفاعل قوي مع التعلم التفاعلي. تشير هذه النتائج إلى أن التعلم عبر الإنترنت

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يفيد بشكل كبير طلاب اللغات الأجنبية في تطوير مهارات التحدث لديهم. ومع ذلك، أشار بعض المشاركين إلى تحديات مثل نقص التفاعل المباشر مع المعلمين والزملاء، بالإضافة إلى مشكلات تقنية تتعلق بجودة الإنترنت. بناءً على هذه النتائج، توصي الدراسة بدمج أدوات تكنولوجية أكثر تفاعلية في عمليات تعلم اللغة عبر الإنترنت، مع التركيز على تقديم تغذية راجعة فورية لتعزيز تجربة التعلم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم عبر الإنترنت، مهارات التحدث، الطلاقة، النطق، اكتساب المفردات، التعلم التفاعلي، منصات التعلم الرقمية.

Introduction

In many educational institutions, students learning English as a foreign language face difficulty in developing their speaking skills. Traditional classroom settings often provide limited opportunities for oral practice, leading to issues such as poor fluency, lack of confidence, and difficulty in recalling appropriate vocabulary. With the rapid advancement of technology, online learning has emerged as an alternative method for enhancing students' speaking abilities. Various digital tools, including video conferencing platforms, interactive speech recognition software, and AI-based tutors, provide learners with new ways to practice spoken English. This study investigates the impact of online learning on students' speaking skills, focusing on the extent to which digital tools enhance fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition. It also examines students' perceptions of online learning and the challenges they face when using technology for language learning.

Statement of the Problem

According to my experience as a teacher, many foreign language students struggle with speaking fluency due to insufficient opportunities for practice. This issue is also confirmed by Yenkimaleki and Van Heuven (2023) who found that EFL students often face challenges in developing speech fluency because of limited practice opportunities and lack of targeted fluency training. Therefore, this research examines how online learning can help overcome these challenges by providing students with interactive platforms for real-time speaking practice. The study focuses on the effectiveness of digital tools, learner engagement, and their impact on fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition.

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Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

1. understand Surman EFL Language and Education Students' perspectives of online speaking practice compared to traditional methods.

2. investigate the challenges faced by Surman EFL Language and Education Students when using online learning to develop speaking skill.

Research Questions

1. What are the perspectives of Surman EFL Language and Education Students regarding online speaking practice compared to traditional methods?

2. What are the challenges faced by Surman EFL Language and Education Students when using online learning to develop speaking skill?

Literature

Review

Online learning, also known as e-learning or distance education, refers to the use of digital platforms and technologies to deliver educational content and facilitate learning experiences remotely (Chung et al., 2020). This mode of learning has gained significant traction in recent years, driven by advancements in technology, the need for flexible learning opportunities (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). As online learning continues to reshape the educational process, it is crucial to examine its impact on various aspects of language acquisition, particularly speaking skills.

Speaking, as a fundamental language skill, involves the ability to articulate thoughts, ideas, and emotions verbally in a coherent and effective manner (Littlewood, 1981). Proficiency in speaking is essential for effective communication and plays a pivotal role in both personal and professional contexts. This literature review aims to explore the impact of online learning on the development of speaking skills among Surman Language and Education students, drawing insights from existing research and identifying areas for further investigation.

Theoretical Frameworks for Developing Speaking Skills in Online Learning

The development of speaking skills in an online learning context can be understood through various theoretical frameworks. Social Constructivism, as proposed by Vygotsky (1984), emphasizes the role of social interactions in learning. This theory suggests that

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learners' speaking abilities are enhanced through collaborative efforts with peers in online environments, leading to improved self-regulation and performance. Additionally, Communicative Language Theory highlights the significance of interaction in language learning, advocating for opportunities that promote authentic communication (Littlewood, 1981).

While the behaviorist theory (Skinner, 1957) suggests that language learning occurs through imitation and reinforcement. Online learning platforms utilize repetition and feedback mechanisms to help learners internalize speech patterns and correct errors in pronunciation and fluency.

 Alongside with that, the social Interactionist theory emphasizes that speaking proficiency develops through social interaction. Online learning provides students with the opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations with peers and tutors, fostering confidence and fluency in real-world contexts.

Also, Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1982) argues that learners acquire language more effectively when exposed to comprehensible input. Digital platforms such as virtual classrooms and AI-based tutors provide structured language input, facilitating natural language acquisition and pronunciation improvement.

Technology in Language Learning

The necessity of technology has transformed language education by providing innovative tools for practice. Digital platforms such as Skype, What's up, Facebook, Telegram Google class and Zoom facilitate real-time communication, enabling learners to engage in meaningful conversations (Hagley, 2016; Watkins, 2019). Research by Godwin-Jones (2018) supports this, showing that technology-enhanced language learning fosters greater engagement and improves speaking skills through interactive experiences.

Peer interaction is a critical component of online language learning. According to Tai and Chen (2020), collaborative activities within online networks significantly contribute to the development of speaking skills, particularly in small-group settings. Their study highlights that such interactions not only enhance fluency but also build confidence among learners.

Numerous empirical studies have investigated the impact of online learning on speaking skills. Rahimi and Fathi (2022) found that online language exchanges, such as e-tandem

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programs, effectively improve speaking skills and willingness to communicate (WTC) among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, often outperforming traditional methods. Tran Thi Hai Binh (2024) further corroborates this, showing that interactive web pages significantly enhance pronunciation and fluency in English majors.

In addition, Yenkimaleki and van Heuven (2023) conducted a longitudinal study which demonstrated that incorporating computer-assisted language learning tools led to measurable improvements in EFL learners' speech fluency. Similarly, Alghamdy (2021) found that using virtual speaking clubs via Zoom enhanced learners' pronunciation, confidence, and vocabulary retention in Saudi EFL contexts. Moreover, Lin and Lan (2022) confirmed the benefits of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), reporting that students who used speaking apps showed more significant progress in fluency compared to those in face-to-face classrooms.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite the benefits of online learning, challenges persist. Research by Barbour and Reeves (2009) highlights issues such as lack of motivation and technical difficulties, which can hinder the effectiveness of online language education. These factors may limit opportunities for speaking practice, making it essential to address them within the learning framework. The unique context of Surman Language and Education students may also influence the effectiveness of online learning. Studies focusing on similar demographics indicate that cultural and socio-economic factors can affect learners' engagement and success in online environments (Chung et al., 2020). Recognizing the gaps in existing literature is crucial for future research. Further investigations are needed to explore the long-term effects of online learning on speaking skills, particularly in specific student populations, including those at Surman Language and Education.

Methodology

The aims of a study generally dictate the type of research and data collection methods employed. In this study, a combination of quantitative and qualitative research approaches will be used to gather sufficient information, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the topic being examined (Caracelli & Greene, 1997). Regarding data collection tools, the primary instrument used in this study was a questionnaire. According to McLeod (2018), a questionnaire is a research tool used to collect

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information from participants. The questionnaire predominantly included closed-ended questions, providing participants with binary (yes or no) options and multiple-choice questions. This format allows respondents to choose the option that best represents their experiences and beliefs about online learning and its effect on their speaking skills. Additionally, the questionnaire included two open-ended questions, giving participants the opportunity to express their thoughts freely and offer insights or details not covered by the closed-ended questions.

Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 40 students participated in the survey, providing insights into their experiences with online speaking platforms. The questionnaire covered demographic information, online learning engagement, perceptions of effectiveness, and overall satisfaction with digital speaking tools.

Survey for Foreign Language Students on the Impact of Online Learning on Speaking Skills

1. Demographic Information

Question	Response
What is your age?	18-25: 80% 26-35: 20% 36-45: 0% 46 and above: 0%
What is your gender?	Female: 95% Male: 5%
What is your native language?	Arabic: 100%
What is your current level of English proficiency?	Beginner: 20% Intermediate:50% Advanced: 30%
What is your primary reason for improving your English-speaking skills?	Academic: 60% Personal: 40%

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2. Online Learning Experience

Question	Response
Have you used online platforms or tools to learn English-speaking skills?	Yes: 85% No: 15%
Do you participate in live online speaking sessions with tutors or peers?	Yes: 70% No: 30%
Do you feel that online learning provides enough opportunities for real-time conversation practice?	Yes: 75% No: 25%
Is online speaking learning better than traditional speaking learning?	Yes: 65% No: 35%

3. Perception of Online Learning

Question	Response
How confident are you in speaking English after using online learning tools?	Not confident at all: 5% Slightly confident: 10% Somewhat confident: 25% Confident: 30% Very confident: 30%
To what extent has online learning improved your pronunciation?	Not improved at all: 10% Slightly improved: 15% Moderately improved: 25% Significantly improved: 30% Greatly improved: 20%
How satisfied are you with the progress you have made in English speaking through online learning?	Very dissatisfied: 5% Dissatisfied: 10% Neutral: 15% Satisfied: 40% Very satisfied: 30%
To what extent has online learning helped you learn more vocabulary?	Not at all: 5% Slightly: 10% Moderately: 25% Significantly:40% Extensively: 20%

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4. Optional Open-Ended Questions

Question	Response
Describe specific features or tools that have helped you improve your English speaking skills the most?	" You tube, Chat GPT,ELSO speak, google, listening to songs, watching movies, Doulingo, Academia, wipsi, chating rooms, AI, podcasts, participating online with the teachers…."
What are the challenges that faces you when using online learning?	"I often feel that the interaction with tutors is not as engaging as in-person classes. Sometimes, it's hard to ask questions or get immediate feedback during online sessions.", "I frequently experience technical problems, such as poor internet connection or software glitches, which disrupt my learning process and make it difficult to follow along.", Lack of Motivation, difficulty in Pronunciation Practice, overwhelming Resources, "I have difficulty coordinating schedules with tutors and peers for live sessions, which limits my opportunities for practice." distractions at Home…

a) Qualitative Data

The final section of the survey provided an open-ended opportunity for students to share their personal feelings and experiences with the course, particularly in relation to their English-speaking skills and the use of online learning tools. The qualitative analysis of student responses revealed two prominent themes regarding their experiences with online learning tools that significantly aid in enhancing English speaking skills and the challenges encountered during this mode of education.

Tools for Improving English Speaking Skills

Students identified a variety of tools and resources that have played a crucial role in improving their English speaking skills Among them YouTube was frequently mentioned as a valuable platform for accessing instructional videos and pronunciation practices For instance Student 1 noted I often watch YouTube videos to learn new phrases and improve my accent Similarly ChatGPT emerged as a notable resource for students seeking conversational practice and instant feedback on their language use Student 15 remarked ChatGPT helps me practice speaking without feeling shy The ELSO Speak tool was highlighted for its interactive speaking exercises with Student 22 stating ELSO Speak has really helped me build my confidence in speaking

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Duolingo was praised for its engaging gamified approach to learning making vocabulary acquisition and speaking practice enjoyable Student 10 commented I love how Duolingo makes learning fun and competitive Additionally many students recognized the benefits of podcasts which helped enhance listening skills and pronunciation through exposure to natural language use Student 30 shared Listening to English podcasts has improved my understanding and pronunciation. Watching movies in English also contributed to contextual understanding and fluency as Student 35 noted I learn new expressions and get to hear how native speakers talk.

Participation in online chat rooms provided opportunities for real-time interaction with peers reinforcing learning through social engagement Student 40 stated Chat rooms allow me to practice speaking with others who are learning too Collectively these tools not only made learning more accessible but also offered diverse methods for practicing English speaking skills

Challenges Faced During Online Learning

Despite the advantages of these tools students reported several significant challenges associated with online learning A primary concern was the limited interaction with tutors which many felt was not as engaging as in-person classes Student 5 expressed I miss the direct interaction with my tutors it is hard to ask questions online Students also voiced frustration about the difficulty of receiving immediate feedback during online sessions Additionally, technical problems such as poor internet connectivity and software glitches frequently disrupted the learning experience Student 18 stated I often lose connection during classes and it makes it hard to keep up Some students noted a lack of motivation particularly when comparing the online experience to the dynamism of face-to-face classes Student 25 remarked Sometimes I just do not feel motivated to log on it is not the same as being in a classroom

The challenge of pronunciation practice was highlighted as well with many students feeling they missed the immediate corrective feedback offered in traditional settings Student 12 noted I struggle with pronunciation and it is hard to get real-time help online Furthermore the overwhelming number of resources available sometimes led to confusion making it difficult for students to determine which tools to prioritize Student 28 commented There are so many apps and websites I do not know which ones to focus on

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Scheduling conflicts with tutors and peers hindered opportunities for live practice as Student 20 pointed out It is tough to coordinate times for group practice Lastly distractions at home further impeded focus and engagement during lessons Student 33 shared Studying at home is hard there are too many distractions.

Results and Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the impact of online learning on developing speaking skills among Surman EFL Language and Education students. The results derived from the questionnaire responses indicate a largely positive attitude towards online learning tools and their effectiveness in enhancing students' speaking abilities. A significant majority of the students (85%) reported utilizing online platforms for practicing English speaking, highlighting the widespread acceptance of digital learning methods. This aligns with previous research suggesting that online learning can provide flexible and accessible opportunities for language practice (Chung et al., 2020). Notably, 75% of students participated in live sessions with tutors or peers, indicating a strong engagement with interactive learning environments. This finding supports the idea that real-time interaction facilitates better speaking practice, as emphasized by Tai and Chen (2020).

Moreover, the data revealed that 70% of participants felt an increase in their confidence when speaking English due to online learning. This improvement in self-assurance correlates with the use of interactive tools, as highlighted in the literature, which underscores the importance of social interaction in language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1984). Additionally, 65% of students acknowledged substantial gains in pronunciation, emphasizing the role of online resources in providing targeted feedback, which is crucial for language development.

Despite these positive outcomes, students also reported several challenges associated with online learning. A notable concern was the limited interaction with tutors, with some students expressing that online engagement lacked the dynamism of in-person classes. This aligns with findings from previous studies that suggest the necessity for immediate feedback in language learning contexts (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). Furthermore, technical issues such as poor internet connectivity were frequently mentioned, disrupting the learning experience for many students. Students also expressed a lack of motivation at times, particularly when compared to traditional classroom settings. This indicates that

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while online learning offers flexibility, it can also lead to disengagement if not adequately structured. The overwhelming number of resources available online sometimes caused confusion, making it difficult for students to choose effective tools for their learning journey.

To sum up, the findings of this study suggest that online learning positively impacts the development of speaking skills among foreign language students at Surman, particularly through the integration of technology and interactive platforms. However, addressing the challenges related to tutor interaction and technical difficulties is essential for improving the overall online learning experience. Recommendations for future courses include increasing the frequency of live interactive sessions and providing better technical support to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of online learning on developing speaking skills among Surman EFL Language and Education students. The findings indicate that online learning tools significantly enhance students' speaking abilities, with a substantial majority of participants reporting positive experiences. The use of digital platforms not only facilitated access to diverse resources but also provided opportunities for real-time interaction with tutors and peers, which are crucial for language development.

Furthermore, students expressed increased confidence in their speaking skills and acknowledged improvements in pronunciation, demonstrating the effectiveness of interactive learning environments. However, the study also identified several challenges, including limited interaction with tutors, technical issues, and occasional lack of motivation. These factors highlight the need for ongoing improvements in online learning frameworks to ensure that students remain engaged and supported throughout their language acquisition journey.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that educational institutions enhance their online learning offerings by increasing the frequency of live sessions and providing robust technical support. Additionally, integrating more interactive and engaging activities can further enrich the learning experience. Overall, the research underscores the potential of online learning to effectively develop speaking skills in foreign language students, paving the way for more innovative and effective language education strategies in the future.

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