

## Enhancing Listening and Speaking Skills of Graduate Students through the Digital Platform: A Review

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### Abstract

*This research describes a virtual architecture with embedded pedagogical agents for enhancing graduate learners' listening and speaking skills. In addition to official graduate programmes, graduate students are expected to build abilities in oral and written communication and collegial relationships. In higher education, there appears to be an expectation that students acquire professional skills through completing prescribed academic work and interacting with other students and instructors. Critics of online education wonder whether online graduate students can fully participate in such graduate groups and access these informal chances for professional skill development. Creating and implementing such activities for online graduate students may be necessary. This study attempted to improve college graduates' speaking and listening abilities using digital platforms. The present study revealed that digital platforms have a significant role in enhancing the English proficiency of graduate students. The modern digital era has spawned countless international corporations and emerging firms. With the availability of virtual classrooms, students can keep practising their speaking and listening skills even after class has ended. These flexible solutions let students take practice outside of the classroom and into student-driven learning centres, create asynchronous activities, and more. Having students record themselves (either on video or just audio) allows them to hone their listening skills and helps them better understand and interpret the spoken word.*

**Keywords:** Graduate Learners, Speaking, Listening, Digital platforms

## **Introduction**

English is now an integral part of the technological world. All international business and diplomatic interactions take place in English. Recently, a deluge of emails and WhatsApp messages relating to business matters have been received. Communication can also be facilitated through voice chats, Skype calls, and other similar technologies. Many millions of messages are sent and received daily using these networks. Therefore, employers prefer applicants who are fluent in English. Employees in the corporate sector are expected to communicate effectively in both written and spoken English. Graduating students' ability to listen to and speak English improves.

There is no difference in the challenges that graduate students face whether they attend classes in a physical location or online. The apparent fact that students should immediately begin developing their academic roles and professional skills is rarely emphasized, even in the most explicit curricula. Despite this uncertainty, studies and experiences have shown that online graduate students can achieve intellectual growth, learn to balance work, school, and personal responsibilities, acquire knowledge and professional skill necessary to their scholarly roles, internalize the values of lifelong learning, and be active members of a learning community. In forming their identities as students and scholars, graduate students interact with and learn from their peers in the academic community (Collier, 2001). Burke (1980) argues that this can be accomplished through repeated cycles of self-reflection and constructive behaviour on the part of the learner.

Listening, speaking, and writing skills are increasingly necessary for business. Communication skills with clients, customers, colleagues, etc., are heavily weighted in employee evaluations. Appropriate language and tone are essential for effective business communication. Instilling these skills in graduate students is crucial. Students need to be taught the value of nuanced language and its use.

## **Literature review**

The importance of both fluency in English and proficiency in Business English has grown alongside the development of modern technology and the expansion of global trade. Businesses, governments, and cultures have all undergone profound changes in the last few decades due to globalization and the rise of information technology (Aferdita, 2015).

Due to the rise of electronic business communications like e-commerce, e-marketing, and more, modern technology has become increasingly important to companies. The online system is quickly replacing traditional methods of doing business. Companies, clients, customers, stakeholders, and so on can now conduct their business dealings more quickly and efficiently thanks to the Internet. E-business has provided a new lens through which to view business management by combining the power of traditional IT with the reach of the web.

Technology has become a crucial part of the educational process because it facilitates students' and teachers' constant, instantaneous communication and collaboration regardless of physical location or time difference (Nor Hapiza Mohd Ariffin & Saliza Ramly, 2017). This is evident in the proliferation of online education opportunities. However, technology's impact is not limited to distance education; it is also used in traditional classrooms.

Anelka Aziz (2018) and Shopova (2014) report that online education is increasingly a priority in the educational system. They said that students could reap unique benefits from online education throughout their studies. Since this is the case, many nations are changing their approach to education by switching from traditional classrooms to online ones, both at the secondary and tertiary levels. Despite this, many reports have shown that students face online learning difficulties (Tsai, 2009; Matthew & Chung, 2021; Rahiem, 2021; Sim, Sim & Quah, 2021).

According to Lee (2001), students need time to adjust to the new learning environment and challenges they may face, so teachers need to get their take on learning online. Adjusting to the new platform may be difficult for some students as they work to implement their unique methods of learning. Some students learn best when surrounded by classmates and instructors (Crim & Reio, 2011). They noted that if students needed immediate help to seek clarification when problems arose with the teacher or peers, it could cause them stress and anxiety (Heirdsfield, Walker 2011). This could affect how they perform and feel about using technology in the classroom. However, when students' multimedia preferences and learning styles are matched with the online course materials, they are more likely to be successful in online learning (Surjono, 2015).

However, when it comes to online education, students have varying opinions. For example, Huang (2016) found that, when given the option between traditional classroom instruction and online study, most students preferred the latter. Rodrigues and Vethamani (2015) also discovered that, despite having a poor internet connection, students still prefer using online

resources to improve their public speaking skills. In addition, they claimed that today's students have a firm grasp of how classroom innovation contributes to their ability to learn and grow as communicators (Moya, 2015).

Students can have a more stimulating learning experience when actively participating in their education. Students have a greater retention capacity when actively involved in their studies. However, in a typical lecture hall, students are not given enough chances to participate actively in the educational process. This might be the case because of factors like a lack of time in class or a predetermined curriculum. Today, especially in this age of globalization, there is a greater need than ever before for the use of ICT in the field of education, and this has had profound effects on how lessons are delivered and how teachers and administrators prepare their students for success in the workplace (Jabeen & Thomas, 2015). As a result, many students may lose motivation to acquire the requisite language skills if taught conventionally. Traditional methods of instruction are too mechanical to allow for a truly engaging learning experience for students.

Technology integration has been shown to be an effective learning tool in many studies, both because it aids in students' ability to learn and encourages student participation in the learning process (Wang, Liu, & Fu, 2015). Numerous studies have shown that teacher-supported online learning, like that found in discussion forums and the active participation of classmates, is more effective in fostering learning than traditional face-to-face teaching methods (Wang, Liu, & Fu, 2015; Li, 2016). Learners likely attribute this to the materials' perceived adaptability, relevance, and fun factor.

The online platform offers a unique opportunity to improve language competence among graduate students. Using a digital platform is a novel approach to developing students' linguistic abilities. Teachers today must pay attention to both time-honoured pedagogical practices and the emerging digital medium for language instruction. Practical learning experiences are provided by the "digital classroom" or "smart classroom" concept because students are better able to understand the material, consider how it might change their lives, draw parallels to their own experiences, and consider how the material might provide them with new avenues for advancing their command of the English language (Mangayarkarasi & Preethi, 2011). Because of the rise of digital media, language instruction has undergone a sea change.

As Florez (1999) points out, lessons in listening and speaking "can follow the usual pattern of preparation, presentation, practise, evaluation, and extension" (p. 2). Typically, these phases outline the activity's objectives, assess whether or not students have the prerequisite knowledge or abilities, implement the skill or form in question, monitor student progress, and assess the outcome. Using this framework, educators can zero in on the needs of their language learners and integrate technology where it will have the most significant impact.

The same topic, Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) in Language Classrooms, was studied by Patel (2015). He used questionnaires and mathematical analysis to conduct this research. The data demonstrate that English educators gave their students numerous chances to use technological means to advance their language learning and accomplish their linguistic objectives. Overall, this research aims to define emerging language learning tendencies with technology.

Technology's broad appeal has led to its rapid adoption in all areas of society, including the classroom. Educators and students alike can benefit from reading Costley's article, "The Positive Effects of Technology on Teaching and Student Learning" (2014). The author has done extensive research for this paper. This paper shows that there are only upsides to utilizing technology for learning a new language. In addition, students of all ages, including those with special needs, can benefit from using technology in the classroom. Incorporating technology into learning English has many positive outcomes, including increased student motivation, engagement, collaboration, and technology skills.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) was studied by Sherine et al. (2020). They looked into how using a Bring Your Device (BYOD) strategy improved both listening and speaking abilities and how MALL affected the development of articulatory and phonological features of pronunciation. Twenty-five first-year Electronics and Communication Engineering students were recruited to participate in the study by bringing their mobile devices to the laboratory. After a 15-week semester, data was gathered through semi-structured personal interviews and a pre-and post-test based on the IELTS speaking test format. Results from both the interviews and the alternative hypothesis show that participants showed marked improvements in their speaking ability and pronunciation after completing the training programme. 64% of respondents also said they supported the BYOD strategy.

Aryani's (2019) research aimed to develop a cutting-edge audiovisual medium for enhancing public speaking abilities; they called it SCRAMBLE. A total of nine boys and nine girls from Kindergarten B at Cahaya Bangsa School participated in the study. The media was created following a ten-step process that included testing, evaluating, and refining it until it met industry standards. The researcher collected information through pre-and post-testing of verbal skills and the observation of participant behaviour. Positive results were achieved through the use of media. The participants' level of oratory improved after participating in SCRAMBLE.

### **Objectives of the study**

This research lays the groundwork for improving one's communication abilities across digital mediums, particularly emphasizing one's listening and speaking skills.

### **Methodology**

The present study is based on secondary data, and the literature has been reviewed from various online databases and analyzed.

### **Discussion**

Speaking and listening fluently are foundational literacy skills that will help your children succeed in school. Maintaining focus on the speaker to absorb what they are saying is the most fundamental aspect of listening. Students who wish to become better public speakers should engage in role-play, use precise language, make direct eye contact, and speak with assurance. These advantages of communicating and listening are most applicable in everyday settings. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that listening serves many purposes beyond learning new vocabulary. Learners of a foreign language would do well to concentrate less on the target language's grammar and more on the message's meaning. This highlights the significance of students developing both their listening and speaking skills. Although it is generally accepted that oral and aural skills are inextricably intertwined, it has been customary to emphasize the former while downplaying the latter for some time in language teaching. Instructors of a foreign language should stress the importance of developing skills like prediction, tolerance of ambiguity, and linking ideas so that their students can spend less time on individual words that are usually unnecessary for comprehension.

Before beginning work on a task, teachers can help students improve their communication skills by discussing the task's title, theme, and cultural context. Anything from commercials to

books can be a jumping-off point for ideas about what to do with your time. In their native tongue, students have ready access to language in meaningful contexts, from which they can learn the linguistic patterns they will later use to create their unique linguistic system. Second-year students of a foreign language often do not have enough time to acquire a solid linguistic basis to construct the complex arguments and arguments they will need to defend in their final papers. Using classroom materials that are simple to grasp can help mitigate this problem. Therefore, all activities should focus on enhancing students' listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills to express themselves more effectively in conversation.

The percentage of students who regularly read newspapers has dropped significantly in recent years. Recent technological advancement has significantly impacted the graduates' way of life. Graduates' reading habits have changed since the advent of WhatsApp and other social media networks. Students graduating today are weighed down by a mountain of knowledge, both academic and otherwise. They must, therefore, be compelled to read the news online. They need to be aware of the benefits of staying up-to-date on news stories, especially those related to science, that can be found in online newspapers.

The ability to communicate effectively in academic and professional settings has risen in importance in recent decades. Technical proposal presentations, paper presentations, laboratory presentations, group discussions, and interviews necessitate strong public speaking skills. Effective verbal communication for professional purposes is also valued in the business world.

### **Listening abilities**

University students should prioritize honing their listening skills because they are essential for comprehending lectures and taking notes.

If you want to improve your listening skills, you need to train your ear to recognize the individual sounds that make up the English language. Words and sentences can be picked out more readily as a result of this. Listening to English-language radio and television regularly can help you become accustomed to the sounds of English, making it easier to pay attention and understand English speakers in everyday situations. Listening to the radio or TV in English can help you pick up on the rhythms of the language even if you do not understand a word.

Making up your sentences will help you make the sounds on your own. This is why developing your listening, and speaking abilities go hand in hand when studying a new language.

## Speaking abilities

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It is challenging to find time in the school day to practise all these crucial skills, especially speaking and listening, which are arguably just as important as reading and writing. The good news is that students can continue honing their speaking and listening abilities in virtual environments made possible by today's technological advancements. These flexible platforms let you take practice outside of the classroom and into student-driven learning centres, create asynchronous activities, and more. Students can practise listening to themselves and others by recording their speeches (either on video or audio only).

Live, face-to-face communication is essential, but digital experiences can offer some unique benefits, too.

**Confidence Scaffolding:** One of the universal human anxieties is public speaking. Students may find this accurate as they develop their sense of self-worth and confidence. Recording one's thoughts are often more comfortable for students than expressing them verbally. In preparation for presenting in front of an audience, students can benefit from listening to and practising with recordings.

**Asynchronous Access:** By providing students with opportunities to speak and listen digitally, you can free up valuable class time for other activities. Students outside recording time is their own time, not during class. Students can record whenever they are ready in the classroom or as a station rotation. Both you and your students may benefit from this increased leeway.

Peer Reflection: Due to the digital recording of these interactions, students often have more time to consider their messages and the process of speaking, listening, and responding, resulting in more thoughtful and deliberate exchanges.

Self-Reflection: Students can better understand how their intended audience responded to their work by listening to recorded versions of their presentations. This has the potential to be an intense and illuminating encounter.

Growth Monitoring: When students digitally record their conversation, it gives you a genuine learning artefact to analyse with your class. Listening to one's growth documented in recordings made at the beginning and end of the year can be very motivating. This can shed light on the issue of reading fluency in particular.

### **List of audio and video tools for the right fit for helping your students practice speaking and listening virtually.**

Flip (Tips): Microsoft's free and feature-rich video conferencing solution facilitates secure group video capture. Screen casting and video recording software have allowed students to record their own voices while working. For a more interactive experience, they can also provide feedback on each other's recordings.

Note: This practical application (and its associated Chrome add-on) enables users to record sound directly into Google Slides, Docs, and Sheets. In one easy step, students can listen to audio played from these items and add recordings of their voices. When combined with Google Slides, Mote shines.

Padlet (Tips): All sorts of multimedia content (uploads, photos, video, audio, screen recordings, drawings, links, and more) can be added to this online bulletin board by the students. You can make up to three Padlets with a free account.

Seesaw (Tips): In addition to taking pictures, drawing, and taking notes, you can also record audio. The video option allows students to record both sound and video. Seesaw is excellent for students of all ages because of its low barrier to entry.

VoiceThread: A free account allows the user to create up to five VoiceThreads, each of which allows for student responses in the form of voice and text comments on uploaded media. This is an excellent opportunity to refine your verbal, aural, and visual communication skills.

LMS: Audio and video recording features are typically built into LMSs. These are great places to start practising your voice-over skills because they are simple.

The following are the best digital tool to improve listening and speaking skills based on the study:

i) Listen Notes: students find podcasts on just about any subject matter with this search engine. Students can benefit greatly from downloading podcasts onto their portable media players and listening to them whenever it is most convenient for them. Teachers and students alike can benefit from using Listen Notes to locate relevant audio content. Students who register can begin "curating" playlists of their favourite podcast episodes, allowing them to practise their listening skills whenever it is convenient for them. The majority of the podcasts are real-world broadcasts, thus they're best for advanced learners. However, there are also podcasts produced specifically for ESL/EFL students.

ii) Pronunroid: There is an app for Android called Pronunroid that will help pronounce IPA words correctly. Playing fun games like "Guess the Symbol," "Guess the Pronunciation," and "Guess the Spelling" will greatly aid in students progress toward a more natural and fluent English voice.

## **Conclusion**

Career prospects are excellent for college grads who study languages well. It is crucial, then, that English not be viewed merely as a subject for exam purposes but as a means to global interactions. Therefore, this research aimed to improve graduate-level students' linguistic competence by means of an efficient digital platform. The internet age has led to a dramatic increase in sales and commerce. Electronic business communications, such as e-commerce, e-marketing, etc., have pushed companies to rely heavily on technology. The online business system is rapidly replacing the older, more traditional business methods. The Internet has simplified and boosted business transactions involving companies, clients, customers, stakeholders, etc. By combining the clout of traditional IT with the reach of the web, e-business has given business management a fresh perspective. Employing highly skilled workers and keeping them around to provide optimal service has become a significant challenge for businesses. (Elena-Iulia, 2014) Because of this, there is now a higher demand for competent employees who can aid in the development of the business. So, it is no surprise that Business English, a specialized form of English ideal for professional interactions, has become so

prevalent. Word choice and syntax in a business setting diverge from those in everyday speech. In today's workplace, listening and communicating effectively are more valuable than ever. The ability to communicate effectively is prioritized when employees must interact with clients, customers, colleagues, etc. The ability to express oneself effectively in business depends on using the appropriate language and tone. Teachers should also introduce helpful apps or websites where students can do extra work outside class. Since it is more entertaining, students are more likely to participate actively in their education. It was previously thought that students could not learn the skills of speaking and listening by themselves at home. That knowledge could only be gained through first-hand exposure. However, with the development of contemporary technology, students have more opportunities to study independently outside the classroom.

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