A Qualitative Analysis of Digital Media Use in Speaking Instruction in the Hybrid Learning

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use of digital media in supporting speaking instruction within hybrid learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Classroom. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research explores how students and lecturers experience digital tools such as Zoom, WhatsApp Voice Notes, and and other digital tools during speaking tasks in both online and offline settings. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis involving two English Lecturers and twelve students at Bosowa University. Thematic analysis revealed three major findings: (1) digital media facilitates flexible, autonomous, and personalized speaking practice, particularly benefiting students with speaking anxiety; (2) the hybrid learning model alters emotional and interactive dynamics, often reducing spontaneity, immediacy, and social presence; and (3) technical and pedagogical challenges persist, including unequal access to technology and the need for lecturer adaptability, which prompted the emergence of creative instructional strategies. These results are interpreted through key theoretical lenses, including Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, the TPACK framework, and Connectivism. The findings contribute uniquely to the field by focusing on the micro-level dynamics of speaking instruction, an area often overlooked in broader technology-in-education discussions. The study concludes that while digital media has the potential to enhance speaking skill development, its effectiveness is highly dependent on contextual factors such as infrastructure, emotional engagement, social interaction, and thoughtful instructional design. Practical implications are offered for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to create more inclusive, emotionally responsive, and pedagogically coherent hybrid speaking environments.

Keywords: *EFL, speaking skills, hybrid learning, digital media, qualitative research, student engagement, Lecturers' adaptation.*

1) INTRODUCTION

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, speaking is widely recognized as one of the most intricate skills for students to master. This skill encompasses not only the articulation of words but also fluency, intonation, appropriate expression, and the ability to engage effectively in communicative interactions. Traditionally, speaking instruction has occurred through face-to-face settings, allowing real-time interaction between lecturers and learners, and among peers. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, disrupted this conventional model, triggering a systemic shift toward hybrid

learning, which combines online and in-person modes. This pedagogical transition necessitated substantial adjustments, particularly in developing speaking skills that are inherently interactive.

Digital media has emerged as a primary solution to the limitations imposed by reduced physical interaction. Platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and other educational technologies have provided avenues for students to practice speaking in online environments. While some research suggests that digital tools foster greater student engagement and flexible learning (Oskarita & Arasy, 2024), their effectiveness in enhancing speaking proficiency remains contested. Persistent challenges include unreliable internet access, reduced access to non-verbal cues, and difficulties in delivering timely and meaningful feedback, all of which are crucial in effective speaking instruction.

This study investigates a central question: How does the use of digital media in hybrid learning environments influence students' speaking skill development? Answering this question is essential, as speaking is a fundamental component of communicative competence in today's globalized context. A better understanding of how digital tools either support or hinder speaking development may inform more adaptive and effective instructional designs.

While prior studies have examined the broader role of technology in education, there is a noticeable gap in focused research exploring the specific impact of digital media on speaking instruction within hybrid learning frameworks. Existing literature tends to prioritize technical platform usage or concentrate on other language skills like reading and writing. This study addresses that gap by analyzing the lived experiences of both lecturers and students in using digital tools for speaking instruction, and by identifying common barriers and strategies for overcoming them.

Employing a qualitative methodology, this study aims to generate deep insights into how speaking instruction unfolds in hybrid classrooms. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of more effective and contextually relevant pedagogical approaches, while also offering practical guidance for educators and policymakers in designing responsive and inclusive language learning curricula for the digital age.

While numerous studies have explored digital technologies in general language education, few have specifically examined how digital media shapes speaking instruction within hybrid EFL classrooms. This study addresses that gap by focusing on the underexplored yet pedagogically significant domain of speaking skill development in hybrid settings, a context often overshadowed by broader discussions on other language skills or platform usage. Through a micro-level analysis of

students' and lecturers' lived experiences, this research uncovers the pedagogical affordances as well as the emotional, interactive, and technical complexities involved in digital speaking tasks. By bridging theory and practice, the study contributes nuanced, contextually grounded insights into how digital media can simultaneously empower and constrain communicative competence in the evolving landscape of language education.

2) METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at deeply exploring how digital media is utilized in the instruction of speaking skills within hybrid learning environments. It also investigates how students and lecturers perceive the effectiveness of these digital tools. A qualitative design was chosen because it enables rich, contextual understanding of participants' lived experiences, especially concerning the socio-cultural dynamics of the classroom. This approach facilitates inductive reasoning, allowing themes and patterns to emerge from the data without reliance on statistical procedures.

2.2 Subject

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, which targets individuals with relevant experience and knowledge concerning the phenomenon studied. The sample consisted of:

a. Two English Language Lecturers with at least one year of experience in implementing hybrid learning.
b. Twelve students from English Language Program at Bosowa University, who had actively engaged in speaking tasks within hybrid English classes using platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp Voice Notes, and other digital tools.

2.3 Instrument and Data Collection

The principal research instrument was the researcher, supplemented by various tools to ensure comprehensive and credible data collection. These included:

a. Semi-structured interview guides: Used to elicit participants' insights, experiences, and challenges related to the use of digital media in speaking instruction. The flexible, open-ended format allowed for emergent topics and deep exploration.
b. Observation checklists: Used to systematically document both face-to-face and online classroom interactions, including student participation, types of media employed, and observable verbal and non-verbal behaviors.
c. Document analysis: Included materials such as student speaking recordings, lecturer lesson plans, screenshots of digital classroom activities, and task submissions.
d. These were used for data triangulation.

2.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), was applied to identify and interpret patterns within the qualitative data. The analysis followed six steps:

a. Familiarization: The researcher thoroughly read interview transcripts, field notes, and observation records to become immersed in the data.
b. Initial coding: Significant data units were labeled using descriptive codes such as "student anxiety," "platform flexibility," and "feedback limitations."
c. Theme identification: Related codes were grouped into broader thematic categories, including "Digital Tools as Facilitators," "Barriers to Interaction and Feedback," and "Emotional Impacts of Hybrid Learning."
d. Theme review: Themes were refined for coherence, ensuring alignment with both the data and research questions.
e. Theme definition: Each theme was clearly articulated with supporting subthemes where applicable.

f. Report writing: Themes were elaborated in narrative form, enriched with direct participant quotes to validate findings.

3) RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

These findings provide a unique contribution to the field by focusing specifically on the micro-level dynamics of speaking instruction, a skill often overshadowed by broader technology-in-education discussions. By centering on the hybrid learning experience, the study bridges theoretical insights and classroom realities, offering a grounded understanding of how digital tools empower and constrain speaking development.

3.1 Theme 1: Digital Media as a Facilitator of Flexible Speaking Practice

One of the most consistently observed benefits of incorporating digital media into speaking instruction is the flexibility it affords learners. In contrast to traditional classroom environments, which often require students to perform speaking tasks under pressure and in front of peers, digital platforms allow learners to produce spoken language at their own pace. This shift from synchronous pressure to asynchronous comfort emerged as a central advantage, particularly for students who reported experiencing speaking anxiety. Several participants shared that being able to record, pause, revise, and re-record their speaking tasks granted them a greater sense of control over their language production. As one student remarked, "I don't feel nervous anymore because I can record as many times as I want. I get to practice more before anyone hears me." Such autonomy is rarely available in face-to-face learning environments and marks a significant transformation in the learning experience.

In addition, asynchronous platforms such as Flipgrid, Padlet voice replies, and WhatsApp voice notes enabled students to engage in low-pressure, personalized practice sessions. These tools helped reduce the sense of public exposure that often discourages learners from speaking freely. The ability to preview and review recordings before submission encouraged students to monitor and self-correct their errors, ultimately boosting their confidence and self-awareness as speakers. One participant shared that she often recorded herself multiple times to improve her tone and pronunciation, stating, "I become more aware of how I speak. Before, I never listened to myself. Now I do, and I learn what

sounds right or wrong." This self-reflective process is a critical yet often neglected element of oral language development in live classroom interactions.

A further advantage highlighted by both students and lecturers was the opportunity to incorporate authentic, real-world content into speaking tasks. With access to a variety of multimedia resources, students could respond to current events, online discussions, TED Talks, or trends from social media. This not only enhanced student engagement but also helped learners acquire contextual vocabulary and practical language use. Lecturers observed that students were more fluent and natural when responding to realistic prompts, such as giving opinions on social issues, reviewing products, or simulating job interviews. One lecturer commented, "When students relate the topic to their everyday life, their speech becomes more fluent and less forced." The integration of authentic content fostered meaningful communication and deeper cognitive processing of the language being used.

Digital media also broadened the modes of expression available to students. Traditional speaking classes typically limit learners to verbal interaction, but digital tools allowed for a multimodal approach through video responses, voice recordings, screen captures, and even basic animations. This variety encouraged creative expression and made speaking assignments feel more engaging and relevant. Several students reported feeling more motivated when they could personalize their work. One student creatively integrated background music into her speaking video and said, "I enjoyed making the video. It didn't feel like homework; it felt like making something real." Personalization not only increases engagement but also helps learners develop 21st-century multimodal communication skills that extend beyond the classroom.

Lecturers further noted that students who were typically quiet in face-to-face settings became more articulate and expressive when using digital tools. This finding suggests that digital platforms can democratize speaking participation, giving voice to students who might otherwise remain silent. One lecturer reflected on a shy student's transformation on Flipgrid: "She rarely spoke in class, but when she submitted her Flipgrid videos, she was confident, clear, and even humorous. It was like seeing a new side of her." This shift highlights the potential of digital spaces to provide psychologically safer environments where students are more willing to take risks and communicate authentically.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the use of digital media also reoriented the focus from performance to process. In traditional classrooms, speaking tasks often carry the burden of immediate evaluation, which can inhibit experimentation and spontaneous speech. Digital platforms, by contrast,

provided opportunities for rehearsal, revision, and self-evaluation, enabling students to experiment with vocabulary, test sentence structures, and refine pronunciation without fear of being judged in the moment. This approach supports the principles of process-based learning, which emphasizes growth and improvement over time rather than a singular performance. Lecturers reported that students submitted more polished work and demonstrated clear progress as a result of the repeated exposure and reflective cycles enabled by these tools.

In terms of fluency development, students began to form independent routines around speaking tasks. These included outlining their ideas, rehearsing aloud, and even watching pronunciation tutorials on YouTube—activities undertaken voluntarily outside class hours. One student explained, "Sometimes I spend more time than I need to because I like improving it. I feel proud of the result." This kind of autonomous engagement reflects intrinsic motivation, which is a strong predictor of long-term success in language learning.

Nevertheless, the benefits of digital media were not experienced equally by all students. Learners with limited access to devices or stable internet connections faced difficulties in fully participating in speaking tasks. Some students reported delays in submissions, difficulty uploading large video files, or disruptions during live sessions due to connectivity issues. Although digital tools offer immense potential, these students experienced unequal learning opportunities, emphasizing the persistence of the digital divide. As one lecturer observed, "Some students are left behind not because they're lazy but because they simply can't access the tools." This underscores the need for improved infrastructure and equitable access to ensure that the pedagogical advantages of digital media are distributed fairly.

Lastly, while students appreciated the independence and comfort of practicing alone, several expressed a desire for more interactive speaking opportunities. Although recording tasks built their confidence, they missed the spontaneity, feedback, and social engagement of live conversations. One student summarized, "Speaking alone in front of a camera is okay, but I want to speak to someone. That's how conversations work." This comment underscores the importance of maintaining dialogic interaction, which remains essential for developing real-world conversational competence.

In conclusion, the findings from this theme demonstrate that digital media offers flexible, autonomous, and personalized speaking practice that supports a wide spectrum of learners, particularly those who may be disadvantaged by conventional classroom dynamics. Digital tools enable self-expression, foster reflective habits, and boost student confidence. However, these advantages

must be tempered with deliberate efforts to ensure equitable access and to provide structured opportunities for interaction. When used strategically, digital media should not replace traditional pedagogy but rather extend it, empowering learners to find their voice in their own time and on their terms.

3.2 Theme 2: Emotional and Interactive Dynamics in Hybrid Speaking Activities

While digital media platforms have broadened the opportunities for speaking practice, they have simultaneously transformed the emotional and interpersonal landscape of language learning. Among the core language skills, speaking is arguably the most socially and emotionally charged, involving not only the production of language but also the nuances of turn-taking, facial expressions, body language, and tone interpretation. In hybrid learning environments, where students alternate between face-to-face and digital modes, these vital dimensions are often disrupted, creating emotional ambiguity and mixed experiences among learners.

Some students appreciated the relative comfort of asynchronous speaking tasks, finding them to be a safer alternative to high-pressure live interactions. However, others reported a growing sense of detachment and disengagement when their speaking experiences were mediated through screens. For many, the shift to recording video or audio messages in isolation turned speaking into a solitary act, devoid of immediate feedback or visible reactions from peers or lecturers. One student expressed this sentiment clearly: "It felt like talking to no one. I didn't know if what I was saying made sense because no one was reacting." This lack of interpersonal resonance led some students to question the purpose of their speech and, over time, eroded their confidence, even when they were able to complete the assignments technically well.

Another frequently cited concern was the absence of spontaneous dialogue in online settings. Although platforms like Zoom and Google Meet offered live interaction, technical interruptions, muted microphones, and inactive cameras often hindered natural conversational flow. Lecturers noted that key elements of face-to-face communication, such as spontaneous reactions, humor, interruptions, and fluid turn-taking, were noticeably absent in online contexts. As one lecturer described, "Even when I tried role-playing, it felt mechanical. They waited, paused, and read their

scripts. There was no rhythm like in face-to-face classes." This feedback underscores the importance of co-constructed meaning and spontaneity in developing authentic speaking skills.

The emotional impact of hybrid learning was also evident in how previously active students responded to digital environments. Learners who were once highly engaged in classroom discussions reported becoming more reserved online. The absence of peer presence and what one student called the "coldness" of digital interaction contributed to feelings of isolation. As that student reflected, "When I'm in class, I like to speak up. But online, I feel alone, like nobody is watching. It makes me quiet." This emotional withdrawal not only reduced motivation but also diminished the effectiveness of group-based speaking activities. Even in breakout rooms designed for peer interaction, students often remained silent, unsure of how to initiate or sustain meaningful dialogue.

Paradoxically, while some students felt disconnected in synchronous settings, others found solace in asynchronous speaking tasks. These students appreciated the reduced pressure and the ability to focus on content without the fear of immediate judgment. One participant remarked, "I used to panic when the lecturer asked me to speak. But when I record at home, I can focus better without being nervous." This highlights a key paradox of hybrid learning: while real-time interaction mirrors authentic conversation, it may also intensify anxiety for certain learners. Consequently, digital media both empowers and restricts emotional engagement, depending on individual personality traits, confidence levels, and learning preferences.

Lecturers, too, experienced emotional challenges in adapting to the digital speaking environment. Many reported a sense of disorientation caused by the lack of visual and behavioral cues from students. In traditional classrooms, instructors rely on students' facial expressions, posture, and energy to guide their teaching. In contrast, speaking into a screen filled with muted microphones and blank video windows felt impersonal and demotivating. One lecturer lamented, "I used to read their body language. Now, with black screens and muted mics, I'm just talking into the void." This emotional disconnect not only impacted the delivery of instruction but also weakened the sense of shared presence that is vital for effective communication.

Adding to this challenge was the issue of delayed or insufficient feedback. In face-to-face settings, lecturers can offer immediate clarification, encourage elaboration, or correct pronunciation in real time. In contrast, digital feedback was often delayed, impersonal, or overly generic. One student recounted, "The lecturer said 'Good job' but didn't tell me what I did right or wrong. So, I didn't

know how to improve." This interruption in the feedback loop not only hindered learning but also introduced uncertainty and emotional disengagement, leaving students unsure about their progress.

The interactive dimension of speaking was further diminished by technical issues and low participation. Lecturers struggled to facilitate active group discussions or debates due to unstable internet connections, limited digital fluency, and hesitation among students to speak up. Even when structured activities were introduced, such as using pre-written scripts or guided prompts, the authenticity of interaction often suffered. As one lecturer put it, "They say the lines, but it's like they're acting in a play, not talking for real." The natural ebb and flow of conversation, essential for developing fluency, was largely absent in these artificial exchanges.

Despite these obstacles, some lecturers experimented with strategies to rekindle emotional and social engagement. One effective approach involved peer video responses on platforms like Flipgrid, where students were asked to reply directly to classmates' recorded submissions. This method fostered a sense of interaction and continuity, even within asynchronous formats. Students reported enjoying this activity, noting that it felt "more real than just submitting a video to the lecturer." While not a complete substitute for real-time dialogue, this approach added a layer of interpersonal connection and collaborative learning that helped bridge the social gap in digital speaking practice.

In summary, Theme 2 reveals the intricate emotional and interactive dynamics that accompany the use of digital media in hybrid speaking instruction. While asynchronous tools provided emotional safety for some students, they also limited spontaneity, immediacy, and emotional presence. Lecturers and students alike struggled with feelings of disconnection and the absence of timely feedback, all of which impeded the development of interactive speaking competence. These findings suggest that hybrid speaking instruction must be intentionally designed not only to facilitate language output but also to preserve emotional resonance, social connectedness, and conversational authenticity—elements that are indispensable to communicative success.

3.3 Theme 3: Technical Challenges and Adaptive Strategies by Lecturers

While digital media has expanded the possibilities for speaking instruction, it has also introduced a complex array of technical and pedagogical challenges. Within the hybrid learning model, where instruction is delivered both online and in person, lecturers and students alike faced infrastructural

limitations that significantly impacted the accessibility, quality, and continuity of speaking-related activities. Among the most persistent barriers were unstable internet connections, limited access to digital devices, and a lack of training in educational technologies, especially those required for real-time, audio-visual speaking engagements.

For many students, particularly those from lower-income households, device sharing with family members became a daily obstacle. This constraint often prevented them from joining live speaking sessions or meeting task deadlines. One student shared, "Sometimes I have to wait until night to use the phone because my brother uses it for his campus." In such cases, learners resorted to asynchronous alternatives such as WhatsApp voice notes or short Flipgrid videos. While these tools enabled some level of participation, they restricted opportunities for real-time interaction and spontaneous language use, which are crucial for oral fluency development. Lecturers acknowledged this limitation with frustration, recognizing the digital divide as a significant impediment to equitable participation. As one lecturer noted, "Even when I give flexible deadlines, some students still miss tasks because they simply don't have the tools."

Connectivity problems further compounded these challenges, particularly during synchronous speaking activities like virtual discussions, role plays, or interviews. Students frequently experienced dropped calls, video and audio lag, or were unable to activate their microphones or cameras. These disruptions hindered participation and discouraged learners from engaging in future tasks. A student described their experience: "I tried to speak, but the audio was choppy. The lecturer couldn't hear me, and I felt embarrassed." Such issues not only affected student confidence but also made it difficult for lecturers to assess speaking fluency and pronunciation in real time, often leaving them with incomplete or inaccurate data for evaluation.

Another recurrent issue was the lack of institutional support for educators. Many lecturers were expected to transition to online platforms with little to no formal training. As a result, they were left to navigate new tools and instructional strategies independently. One lecturer candidly admitted, "At first, I only used Google Classroom for written work. I didn't know how to design speaking tasks online." This steep learning curve added to their workload and emotional burden, particularly for those managing large or diverse classrooms. In many cases, lecturers turned to informal learning resources, YouTube tutorials, peer discussions, and trial-and-error experimentation to integrate speaking tasks effectively into the digital environment.

Despite these challenges, lecturers exhibited notable resilience and adaptability, devising creative solutions to maintain meaningful speaking instruction. For students facing technical limitations, alternative formats were introduced, such as allowing audio-only submissions or extending deadlines. One lecturer emphasized, "If a student can't do a video, I just ask them to send audio. The most important thing is that they speak." This flexible approach ensured that students could continue practicing speaking skills regardless of their access to high-end devices or stable internet.

In response to technological constraints, some educators also redesigned their speaking assessments. Rather than assigning formal monologues or scripted dialogues, they shifted toward task-based activities rooted in students' daily lives. Assignments included giving instructions on how to prepare a favorite meal, narrating a personal experience, or describing an object in their room. These low-tech, high-relevance tasks encouraged authentic communication and minimized the need for advanced tools. One lecturer observed, "It's easier for them to talk about something real in their life. Plus, they don't need fancy editing or high-quality video." By aligning speaking tasks with students' lived realities, lecturers managed to preserve instructional quality while increasing learner engagement.

Another strategic adaptation was the incorporation of peer-assisted learning. Given the difficulty of providing individualized feedback to every student, lecturers facilitated peer-to-peer interactions through digital platforms. Students were asked to respond to each other's submissions, provide comments on clarity and pronunciation, and occasionally assess each other using simple rubrics. This practice fostered a sense of community and mutual accountability while also exposing learners to diverse language models. One student noted, "It was fun to hear my friend's video and give advice. I also learned new expressions from them." In large classes, peer feedback served as an essential complement to lecturer evaluations, enriching the learning process.

Lecturers also adopted audio-visual scaffolding techniques to support student performance. These included providing sentence starters, example videos, and pronunciation models before assignments were submitted. By reducing the cognitive load associated with planning and delivery, such scaffolds helped students understand expectations and perform with greater confidence. A lecturer explained, "When I show them an example, their recordings are better. They're more organized and confident." In situations where students were unable to attend live classes, lecturers recorded instructional videos or personalized feedback messages to maintain a sense of presence and

emotional connection. These recordings bridged the physical and emotional gap created by asynchronous communication.

Regarding feedback delivery, educators moved beyond conventional text comments to embrace multimedia responses. Voice notes, screen recordings with annotations, and short reaction videos were used to deliver more personalized and empathetic feedback. One student remarked, "When I hear the lecturer's voice, I feel more connected. It's like she's talking to me, not just grading me." These innovations enhanced the clarity of feedback while also restoring interpersonal connection, which is often diminished in text-based exchanges.

Ultimately, this theme illustrates a narrative of lecturer innovation and agency in the face of systemic limitations. Rather than retreating from the challenges of hybrid speaking instruction, educators redefined their roles, from content deliverers to facilitators, designers, and problem-solvers. These adaptations were not without flaws, and their effectiveness varied depending on context. Nonetheless, they underscore the pivotal role lecturers play in navigating the complexities of digital instruction. At the same time, the findings point to a pressing need for systemic support, including investment in digital infrastructure, targeted lecturer training, and policy frameworks that prioritize equity. Only with such support can digital media fulfill its potential as a tool for inclusive, effective, and meaningful speaking instruction in hybrid learning environments.

Discussion

The findings of this study offer a distinctive contribution to the literature by focusing on speaking instruction, an often-overlooked area in digital and hybrid learning research. While many prior studies have examined general learner engagement or platform use, this study centers specifically on how digital media shapes the development of speaking skills in hybrid environments. By capturing emotional, technical, and pedagogical dimensions from both lecturer and student perspectives, it advances our understanding of the unique challenges and adaptive strategies that emerge in real classroom contexts. This micro-level insight adds depth to ongoing discussions in educational technology and EFL pedagogy, particularly in post-pandemic teaching practices.

This study revealed three interrelated themes in the use of digital media for speaking instruction within hybrid learning environments: (1) digital media as a catalyst for flexible speaking practice, (2) emotional and interactive dynamics in hybrid speaking activities, and (3) technical challenges and

adaptive strategies by lecturers. This section interprets the findings through relevant theoretical frameworks and existing literature in language education and educational technology.

The first theme underscores how digital media fostered learner autonomy, personalization, and self-regulation, core principles within Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Tools such as Flipgrid and WhatsApp Voice Notes enabled students to operate within their ZPDs, often without constant lecturer scaffolding, positioning technology as a mediating artifact in the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). These results also resonate with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which emphasizes autonomy and perceived competence as drivers of intrinsic motivation. Students' ability to independently record, revise, and reflect on their speaking tasks reflected a growing sense of agency over their learning.

Yet, while digital flexibility empowered many learners, the emotional impact of hybrid tools revealed a duality in the affective domain. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), reduced anxiety facilitates language acquisition, an effect seen in students who felt safer using asynchronous tools. However, this reduction in pressure did not universally lead to deeper engagement. Some students reported emotional disengagement due to the absence of real-time interaction or social feedback, reinforcing prior research showing that low anxiety does not always equate to high participation or motivation (Gkonou et al., 2017; Dörnyei, 2009). Moreover, lecturers' inability to observe non-verbal cues or emotional states further limited their responsiveness to students' affective needs, highlighting the ongoing importance of social presence (Gunawardena & Zittle, 1997).

The second theme, the emotional and interactive landscape of hybrid instruction, can be further explained through Social Presence Theory (Garrison et al., 2000), which suggests that meaningful online communication depends on the perceived presence of others. Students expressed a strong desire for dialogic interaction, real-time feedback, and non-verbal signals, even when they appreciated the lower-pressure environment of asynchronous tasks. This finding also aligns with Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which asserts that communication effectiveness is influenced by the richness of the medium. Although Zoom and Google Meet offer relatively rich communication channels, their potential was frequently undercut by muted microphones, turned-off cameras, and irregular participation, factors that diluted interpersonal interaction and classroom cohesion.

The third theme illuminated critical structural and pedagogical issues. Digital inequity, manifested through unequal access to stable internet, digital devices, and quiet workspaces, limited participation for many students, echoing concerns raised in the literature on digital learning disparities (Means et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2020). These inequities undermined the potential benefits of hybrid learning, especially for speaking instruction, which depends heavily on interaction and feedback. Simultaneously, the lack of institutional support placed additional burdens on educators, many of whom were expected to navigate new platforms and redesign speaking activities with minimal training. These conditions reflect Compton's (2009) observations on the new skill sets required of language lecturers in digital contexts.

Despite these barriers, lecturers demonstrated remarkable adaptability. Many leveraged the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) to integrate technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge creatively. Strategies such as peer feedback, task-based assessments using real-life contexts, and audio-visual scaffolds not only bridged technological limitations but also enriched pedagogical delivery. These adaptations support Siemens' (2005) theory of Connectivism, which views learning in the digital age as a process of forming networks, not just of knowledge, but of people, tools, and platforms.

A central tension that emerged from the findings is the trade-off between individual learning efficiency and collective classroom interaction. While digital tools facilitated autonomous practice and personalized feedback, they often fragmented the communal experience of speaking, a vital component of communicative competence. For hybrid learning to effectively support speaking development, digital media must be integrated not as a mere substitute for traditional methods, but as part of a pedagogically coherent, emotionally responsive, and socially inclusive instructional design. This aligns with Garrison and Vaughan's (2008) call for intentionality in blended learning environments, where instructional success depends on thoughtful planning across multiple modalities.

4) CONCLUSIONS

This study examined how students and lecturers experienced the use of digital media in English-speaking instruction within a hybrid learning context. Through thematic analysis of classroom observations, student interviews, and lecturer reflections, the research uncovered a multifaceted picture in which digital media served both as an enabler and a constraint in developing speaking skills.

On the enabling side, platforms such as Flipgrid, Zoom, and WhatsApp Voice Notes offered learners increased flexibility, autonomy, and personalization, especially beneficial for students who felt anxious or limited in traditional face-to-face classrooms. The asynchronous features of these tools promoted self-paced learning, allowing students to rehearse and revise their speech, thereby enhancing both linguistic confidence and reflective learning habits.

Conversely, the transition to digital learning spaces introduced a range of affective and social challenges. Students and lecturers alike reported diminished immediacy, spontaneity, and emotional engagement, which in turn disrupted the social dynamics necessary for effective oral communication. The lack of real-time feedback and reduced presence of non-verbal cues further complicated the development of authentic fluency and interaction.

Additionally, the study highlighted persistent technological barriers and disparities in access to learning tools, which compromised participation and equity. Despite these challenges, lecturers demonstrated creative problem-solving and pedagogical resilience, adapting instructional strategies to meet diverse student needs with limited institutional guidance.

When interpreted through theoretical frameworks such as Sociocultural Theory, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, Media Richness Theory, and Connectivism, the findings suggest that digital media can indeed enhance speaking instruction—but only when applied thoughtfully, with attention to learner context, emotional dynamics, and structural supports.

Implications

a. For Lecturers:

1. Blend synchronous and asynchronous approaches: Combine real-time speaking activities (e.g., Zoom discussions) with asynchronous tasks (e.g., Flipgrid recordings) to accommodate varied learner preferences and speaking styles.
2. Prioritize meaningful feedback: Provide personalized, timely responses using voice notes, video replies, or annotated screen recordings to increase engagement and clarity.
3. Design relevant, authentic tasks: Develop speaking activities rooted in students' real-life experiences to enhance motivation and promote functional language use.
4. Encourage peer interaction: Facilitate structured peer feedback and collaborative speaking projects to maintain social presence and mutual learning.

5. Build digital competence: Engage in continuous professional development to improve confidence and capability in integrating digital tools effectively.

b. For Students:

1. Develop independent learning routines: Students are encouraged to create their strategies for speaking practice, such as outlining key points before recording, rehearsing aloud, and using online tools (e.g., YouTube tutorials or pronunciation apps) to support fluency development.
2. Engage in self-reflection: Regularly reviewing one's own speaking recordings helps identify pronunciation errors, unnatural intonation, or hesitations, thus promoting self-awareness and improvement.
3. Participate actively in peer feedback: By offering constructive feedback to classmates and receiving suggestions in return, students can broaden their linguistic exposure and develop confidence in oral communication.
4. Communicate digital challenges proactively: Students facing technological difficulties (e.g., device-sharing, poor connectivity) should inform lecturers early, so alternative arrangements (e.g., audio-only tasks or extended deadlines) can be made.
5. Maintain emotional resilience: Recognizing that discomfort in speaking is part of the learning process can help students stay motivated. Setting small personal goals and celebrating progress can boost confidence in digital speaking environments.

c. For Institutions and Policymakers:

1. Close the digital divide: Invest in infrastructure and ensure that all students have equitable access to reliable internet and personal devices.
2. Support targeted lecturer training: Provide formal training programs grounded in frameworks such as TPACK to help educators navigate both the technical and pedagogical demands of hybrid instruction.
3. Revise assessment practices: Develop more flexible, inclusive speaking evaluation systems that reflect the realities of hybrid learning environments.
4. Foster a culture of innovation: Encourage experimentation with digital tools and reward creative pedagogical practices that enhance language learning.
5. Attend to student well-being: Embed emotional and social support structures into hybrid models to ensure students feel connected, confident, and cared for.

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