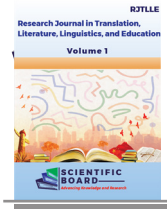


Research Journal in Translation, Literature, Linguistics, and Education (RJTLLE)
https://scientific-board.com/rjtlle Volume 2, Issue 1, 2026

https://doi.org/10.64120/x6gvqy79

RESEARCH ARTICLE **Section:** *Education & Applied Pedagogy*

Published by **Scientific-Board LLC** in the Research Journal in Translation, Literature, Linguistics, and Education (RJTLLE). **Volume 2, Issue 2, 2026**.

ISSN: ***3067-6290 (Online)***
3068-8450 (Print)

Article Details

Received: 18 Jnauary 2026
Revised: 27 February 2026
Accepted: 30 March 2026
Published: 17 April 2026

Conflict of Interest: The author/s declared no conflict of interest.

How to Cite:
Subash, M. (2026). Reimagining speaking skill development through digital edutainment: A mixed-method study. *Research Journal in Translation, Literature, Linguistics, and Education*, 2(2), 11-18. https://doi.org/10.64120/1a0gt850

Reimagining speaking skill development through digital edutainment: A mixed-method study

M. Subash[1]
[1]Thiravium College of Arts and Science for Women Kailasapatti, Theni
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0508-1319
Corresponding author: *subashmari.m@gmail.com*

Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has significantly transformed language pedagogy, particularly in the development of speaking skills among learners at the tertiary level. Traditional teacher-centered methods often fail to address learners' anxiety, lack of engagement, and limited real-life communicative exposure. In this context, edutainment, an integration of education and entertainment, emerges as a promising pedagogical approach that blends meaningful learning with interactive activities. This study reimagines speaking skill development through carefully designed edutainment activities supported by digital tools and AI-enabled applications. Drawing upon classroom-based practices and recent trends in technology-assisted language learning, the paper explores how gamified tasks, role-play simulations, storytelling applications, and AI-driven feedback systems can foster fluency, confidence, and communicative competence. The study argues that digital edutainment not only enhances motivation but also creates low-anxiety environments in which learners can experiment with language more freely. By situating speaking instruction within engaging and technology-rich contexts, educators can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and authentic communication. The findings highlight the transformative potential of integrating digital edutainment into speaking pedagogy, particularly for contemporary learners navigating hybrid and online learning spaces.

Keywords: speaking skills, learners, edutainment, digital learning activities, artificial intelligence, language pedagogy, technology-enhanced language learning

Introduction

The development of speaking skill has consistently remained one of the most demanding dimensions of language pedagogy. Unlike reading and writing, which can be refined through individual

practice and textual exposure, speaking requires immediate processing, linguistic coordination, and social awareness. Learners are expected to think, organize, articulate, and respond in real time. This simultaneity makes oral communication both cognitively and emotionally complex. In tertiary classrooms, particularly in contexts where English functions as a second or foreign language, students often demonstrate adequate theoretical knowledge yet struggle to communicate spontaneously.

Traditional speaking instruction in many institutions continues to rely on scripted dialogues, memorized presentations, and examination-driven tasks. While such practices may satisfy assessment requirements, they rarely cultivate communicative competence. Brown observes that speaking involves interactive negotiation of meaning rather than mere reproduction of language forms (Brown 267). When learners are trained primarily for predictable responses, they are deprived of opportunities to experiment with language creatively and confidently.

The digital era, however, has transformed how learners interact with language outside the classroom. Students today engage with multimedia platforms, short-form videos, podcasts, gaming environments, and AI-driven applications as part of their everyday routines. These digital experiences shape their communicative habits, attention spans, and learning preferences. Yet institutional pedagogy frequently remains disconnected from these realities. The mismatch between learners' digital immersion and conventional classroom methods creates disengagement and communicative hesitation.

In this context, edutainment an approach that purposefully integrates educational objectives with entertaining and interactive experiences offers a productive alternative. Rather than trivializing learning, edutainment harnesses enjoyment as a cognitive catalyst. By incorporating gamified tasks, storytelling platforms, role-play simulations, and AI-supported speaking tools, educators can reconstruct the speaking classroom into a space where learning feels purposeful yet inviting. The integration of digital edutainment does not replace pedagogical rigor; instead, it reframes rigor within experiential engagement.

This article argues that speaking skill development must move beyond mechanical drills toward experiential, activity-oriented, and technology-enhanced environments. By situating edutainment at the center of digital language instruction, educators can foster fluency, confidence, and communicative autonomy among tertiary learners.

Conceptual Framework

Speaking Skill in Second Language Learning

Speaking is not merely the articulation of sounds; it is the orchestration of linguistic competence, pragmatic sensitivity, and socio-cultural awareness. It demands the integration of vocabulary, grammatical structures, pronunciation accuracy, discourse markers, and interactive strategies. Harmer emphasizes that successful speaking requires both fluency and accuracy, and that learners must develop confidence in managing unpredictable communicative situations (Harmer 343).

At the tertiary level, speaking extends beyond conversational exchanges. Students are required to deliver academic presentations, participate in seminars, defend arguments, engage in debates, and perform in professional contexts such as interviews and group discussions. These tasks require not only linguistic knowledge but also strategic competence the ability to clarify meaning, repair communication breakdowns, and adjust language according to audience and context.

Furthermore, affective variables significantly influence speaking performance. Anxiety, fear of ridicule, and self-consciousness often inhibit learners from participating actively. Krashen's concept of the "affective filter" suggests that emotional barriers can obstruct language acquisition even when cognitive input is adequate (Krashen 31). Therefore, speaking pedagogy must address emotional readiness alongside linguistic development.

2.2 Edutainment as Pedagogy

Edutainment refers to the structured blending of instruction with elements of play, creativity, and engagement. It is grounded in the belief that meaningful learning occurs when learners are emotionally invested. Unlike entertainment alone, edutainment maintains clear educational objectives while presenting them through stimulating formats.

In language classrooms, edutainment may take the form of storytelling competitions, simulation games, digital quizzes, podcast creation, collaborative challenges, or AI-based conversational practice. Such activities transform learners from passive recipients of knowledge into active constructors of meaning. Vygotskian perspectives on social interaction support this shift, suggesting that learning occurs through collaborative engagement and guided participation (Vygotsky 86).

Edutainment reduces the rigidity often associated with speaking exercises. Instead of rehearsing predetermined answers, learners engage in scenarios that require adaptation, negotiation, and creative expression. This process fosters deeper cognitive processing and sustained motivation.

Review of Recent Trends in Digital Language Learning

Digital transformation has reshaped educational methodologies across disciplines. In language education, Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) has introduced multimodal instructional strategies, hybrid classrooms, and asynchronous speaking platforms. These innovations enable learners to practice speaking beyond spatial and temporal constraints.

Gamification represents one of the most visible trends in digital pedagogy. By integrating elements such as points, leaderboards, timed challenges, and badges, educators tap into learners' intrinsic motivation. Dörnyei argues that motivation plays a central role in sustaining language acquisition, particularly in communicative skills (Dörnyei 45). Gamified speaking tasks, therefore, combine motivation with linguistic practice, encouraging learners to participate actively without perceiving the activity as burdensome.

Mobile learning applications have further expanded opportunities for autonomous practice. Pronunciation tools equipped with speech recognition technology provide immediate corrective feedback, allowing learners to refine articulation independently. Conversational platforms simulate real-life dialogues, offering repeated exposure to situational language use.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced personalization into speaking pedagogy. AI-driven systems analyze speech patterns, identify pronunciation errors, and suggest targeted improvements. Such feedback supplements teacher evaluation and encourages self-directed learning. However, technological adoption must remain pedagogically grounded. As Warschauer cautions, technology itself does not guarantee improved outcomes; its effectiveness depends on thoughtful integration within instructional design (Warschauer 112).

These developments collectively indicate a shift from teacher-centered instruction toward learner-centered digital engagement. The contemporary speaking classroom must therefore balance technological innovation with human interaction.

Theoretical Foundations

The integration of edutainment into speaking pedagogy is anchored in established learning theories. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes meaningful interaction over rote memorization. It advocates for authentic tasks that reflect real-world communication. Edutainment activities align naturally with CLT principles by creating scenarios that simulate genuine social exchanges (Harmer 69). Constructivist theory posits that learners actively construct knowledge through experience and reflection. Interactive digital tasks, collaborative storytelling, and simulation games provide experiential contexts in which learners negotiate meaning and refine their communicative strategies.

Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis underscores the importance of emotional comfort in

language acquisition. Edutainment reduces anxiety by embedding learning within enjoyable frameworks. When learners perceive speaking tasks as engaging rather than evaluative, they are more willing to experiment with language.

Additionally, socio-cultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development. Speaking activities that involve peer collaboration, digital discussion boards, and group simulations create communities of practice where learners co-construct understanding (Vygotsky 94).

Edutainment Activities for Speaking Skill Development

Effective speaking development requires structured yet adaptable activities that balance guidance with freedom.

Role-Plays and Simulations

Digital role-play scenarios, such as virtual job interviews, press conferences, or business negotiations, expose learners to authentic communicative demands. These simulations encourage spontaneity and contextual vocabulary usage. When learners assume specific roles, they temporarily suspend self-consciousness and focus on fulfilling communicative objectives. This shift reduces performance anxiety and enhances fluency.

Digital Storytelling

Storytelling integrates narrative thinking with oral expression. By creating short audio or video narratives through mobile applications, learners practice sequencing events, employing descriptive language, and maintaining coherence. Digital storytelling also allows for revision and reflection. Learners can listen to their recordings, identify areas for improvement, and gradually refine pronunciation and fluency.

Game-Based Speaking Challenges

Timed speaking games and situational prompts foster lexical retrieval and quick thinking. For instance, learners may be given a random topic and one minute to respond coherently. Such challenges strengthen spontaneity and reduce overreliance on memorization. When embedded within a gamified framework, these tasks promote healthy competition and sustained participation.

Collaborative Online Discussions

Online discussion platforms extend speaking practice beyond classroom hours. Learners can record responses, comment on peers' contributions, and engage in asynchronous debates. This flexibility accommodates diverse learning speeds and encourages reflection before articulation. Over time, repeated exposure to collaborative speaking builds communicative confidence.

AI-Powered Apps and Digital Tools

AI-enabled applications now provide individualized speaking feedback. Speech analysis tools assess pronunciation, stress patterns, and fluency rates. Conversational AI chatbots simulate dialogues, allowing learners to practice without fear of judgment.

Pronunciation-focused apps guide learners through phonetic correction exercises, while fluency trackers monitor speech pace and pauses. Such tools supplement teacher feedback and promote autonomous learning habits.

However, technological integration must be pedagogically guided. Digital tools should enhance, not replace, human interaction in the classroom.

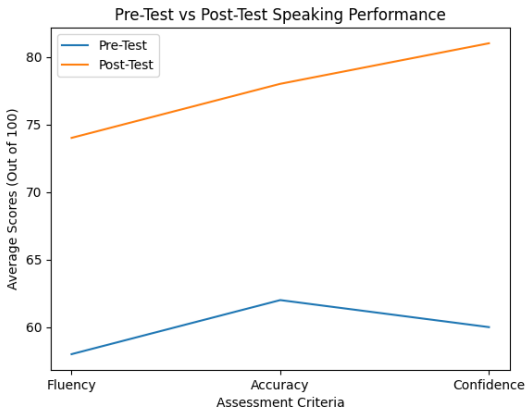
Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-method research design. The participants include tertiary-level learners

enrolled in undergraduate programs. A series of edutainment-based speaking activities were implemented over a structured instructional period.
Data collection tools included:

- Pre- and post-speaking assessment rubrics
- Learner perception questionnaires
- Reflective journals
- Classroom observation records

The intervention involved digital storytelling tasks, AI-supported pronunciation practice, and gamified speaking challenges. Comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate improvements in fluency, accuracy, and confidence.



Pre-Test and Post-Test Speaking Performance

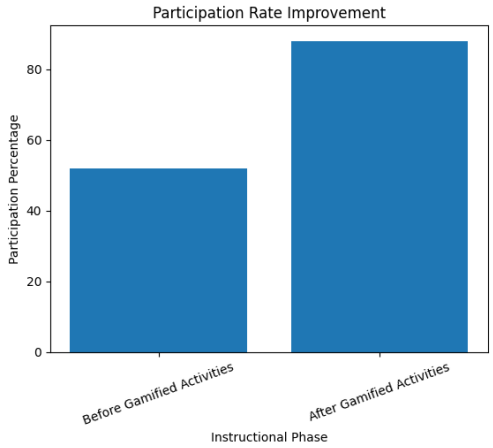
To examine the effectiveness of the edutainment-based intervention, a comparative analysis of pre-test and post-test speaking scores was conducted. The assessment rubric measured three key dimensions of oral proficiency: fluency, accuracy, and confidence. These parameters were selected because they collectively reflect both linguistic competence and communicative readiness.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the post-test scores demonstrate a consistent upward shift across all three categories. Fluency improved noticeably, indicating that learners were able to produce speech with fewer pauses and greater continuity after participating in digital storytelling and gamified speaking activities. This improvement suggests that repeated exposure to structured yet engaging speaking tasks helped learners internalize lexical and syntactic patterns, thereby reducing hesitation.

Accuracy also showed significant enhancement in the post-test phase. The integration of AI-supported pronunciation tools appears to have contributed to this development. Learners received immediate corrective feedback on articulation and stress patterns, enabling them to refine their speech before classroom interaction. Unlike traditional correction methods, AI-mediated feedback allowed learners to practice privately, reducing embarrassment and encouraging self-monitoring.

Perhaps the most striking improvement was observed in the confidence parameter. During the pre-test, several learners displayed visible anxiety, avoided eye contact, or relied heavily on memorized expressions. In contrast, the post-test performance reflected greater spontaneity and willingness to engage in extended responses. This shift indicates that edutainment activities not only strengthened linguistic performance but also positively influenced learners' psychological disposition toward speaking tasks.

Overall, the comparative data validate the pedagogical assumption that experiential and digitally supported speaking activities can foster measurable growth in communicative competence.



Participation Rate Before and After Gamified Activities

Figure 2 presents the change in classroom participation rates following the introduction of gamified speaking tasks. Prior to the intervention, participation remained moderate, with slightly more than half of the learners actively contributing during oral sessions. Observational records indicated that participation was often limited to a small group of confident students, while others remained passive listeners.

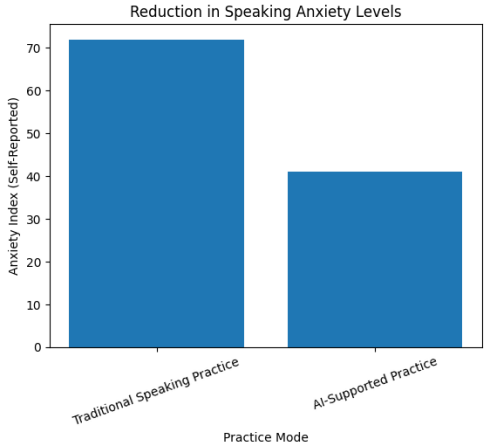
After the incorporation of game-based challenges such as timed speaking prompts, collaborative competitions, and digital point systems participation increased substantially. The post-intervention phase recorded a significant rise in active involvement, with a majority of learners volunteering to speak during sessions.

This increase may be attributed to the motivational structure embedded within gamification. By reframing speaking tasks as challenges rather than evaluations, learners perceived them as opportunities for achievement rather than occasions for judgment. The competitive yet supportive environment reduced performance pressure and stimulated curiosity.

Additionally, the use of digital platforms allowed quieter learners to prepare brief responses before speaking, thereby bridging the gap between preparation and spontaneity. The data suggest that gamified activities democratized classroom interaction by distributing participation more evenly among learners.

The findings reinforce the idea that engagement is not merely a by-product of instruction but a deliberate outcome of thoughtful activity design.

Anxiety Reduction Chart



Reduction in Speaking Anxiety through AI-Supported Practice

Figure 3 illustrates the comparative anxiety levels reported by learners before and after the introduction of AI-supported speaking practice. The anxiety index was derived from learner perception questionnaires

and reflective journals, focusing on feelings of nervousness, fear of negative evaluation, and hesitation during oral tasks.

The data reveal a marked decline in self-reported anxiety levels during AI-mediated practice sessions. Learners expressed greater comfort interacting with speech-recognition tools and conversational AI platforms compared to traditional classroom settings. The absence of immediate peer scrutiny allowed them to experiment with pronunciation and sentence construction without fear of ridicule.

Reflective journal entries further indicate that learners appreciated the opportunity to rehearse responses multiple times before presenting them publicly. This iterative practice process fostered a sense of preparedness and control over their performance. In effect, AI acted as a non-judgmental interlocutor, creating a psychologically safe rehearsal space.

From a theoretical perspective, this reduction in anxiety aligns with Krashen's proposition that a lowered affective filter enhances language acquisition. When emotional barriers diminish, learners are more receptive to input and more willing to produce output. The present findings suggest that AI-supported tools can function as mediating instruments that ease learners into active communication.

However, it is important to acknowledge that technological comfort varied among participants. A small proportion initially expressed apprehension toward digital platforms, highlighting the necessity of gradual orientation and teacher guidance.

Analysis and Discussion

Findings indicate noticeable improvement in learners' fluency and willingness to communicate. Learners reported reduced anxiety during AI-mediated practice sessions, as the absence of peer judgment encouraged experimentation.

Gamified activities significantly increased participation rates. Students who previously hesitated to speak demonstrated gradual improvement in articulation and confidence.

Nevertheless, challenges emerged, including inconsistent internet access and initial resistance from learners unfamiliar with digital platforms. Teacher training and infrastructural support were identified as crucial factors for successful implementation.

Pedagogical Implications

The study underscores the need for activity-oriented digital classrooms. Teachers must design speaking tasks that balance entertainment with academic rigor. Curriculum planners should incorporate AI-supported speaking modules into language courses.

Professional development programs should equip educators with digital literacy skills. Institutions must invest in technological infrastructure to sustain long-term integration of edutainment strategies.

Conclusion

Reimagining speaking skill development requires a shift from conventional lecture-based instruction to interactive, digitally enriched environments. Edutainment activities supported by AI and digital tools create inclusive spaces where learners practice language authentically and confidently.

Future research may explore longitudinal effects of AI-driven speaking interventions and examine cross-cultural variations in digital speaking pedagogy. As digital technologies continue to evolve, language classrooms must adapt thoughtfully, ensuring that innovation remains rooted in pedagogical purpose.

References

Brown, H. Douglas. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. 2nd ed., Longman, 2001.

Dörnyei, Zoltán. *Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge UP, 2001.

Harmer, Jeremy. *How to Teach English*. Longman, 2007.

Krashen, Stephen D. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Pergamon Press, 1982.

Vygotsky, Lev S. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard UP, 1978.

Warschauer, Mark. *Technology and Social Inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide*. MIT Press, 2003.