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## The Effects of Technology on the Oral Communication Skills of Undergraduate ESL Learners

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to find out how oral communication skills can be improved with the use of technology. In the results obtained, it is noticed that students and teachers both said that oral communication skills could be improved by using the technology, but they do not use it in the universities of Karachi. This study made use of questionnaires and interviews in order to find a methodology to find out different reasons why technology should be used to improve the oral communication skills of ESL students. The research was conducted with 100 ESL students, followed by interviews with eight teachers of different universities in Karachi. After carrying out the investigation and looking at the responses of the respondents, it can be concluded that technology positively influences the oral communication skills of the students. After looking at the results, it can be said that technology (such as projector-based teaching, watching TV, films, and video calls) positively impacts the oral communication skills of ESL students.*

**Key Words:** ESL, Oral Communication, Technology

### Introduction

#### Background

#### Communication

Communication is a mechanism for people to engage with one another (Mari, 2016). Oral communication, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, written communication, and visualisation are only a few of the several methods of communication (Rogan & San Miguel, 2013).

#### Oral Communication

Oral communication is the process through which a person attempts to explain himself/herself verbally. Numerous aspects, such as fluency, coherence, and so on, impact the communication between the parties

in this mode of communication (Rogan & San Miguel, 2013). Scholars claim several advantages of fluent oral communication abilities, as well as potential drawbacks (Mari, 2016). Oral communication is beneficial in discussing concerns and activities with individuals throughout everyday activities.

#### The significance of oral communication for ESL students

Certain individuals, referred to as ESL learners, are required to acquire English as a secondary language (Mari, 2016). Due to their lack of confidence, ESL students often experience uncomfortable,

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apprehensive, or anxious feelings during spoken communication ([Ayub & Lodhi, 2016](#)). Particularly when they talk, their confidence level sometimes plummets. Not only is oral communication necessary for ESL students, but it is also a critical mode of communication ([Rind, 2014](#)). ESL learners and other undergraduate students should have good oral communication skills since they will enhance their communication talents and skills necessary at several stages of life ([Rogan & San Miguel, 2013](#)). Although speaking is a soft talent, if done well, it has the ability to persuade even the most powerful man on the planet.

### **Factors Affecting ESL Students' Oral Communication**

Oral communication plays a significant part in a person's total communication abilities since it is employed in normal conversations ([Rind, 2014](#); [Barabas, 2013](#)). [Mari, \(2016\)](#) and [Pathan \(2013\)](#) have shown that oral communication abilities are impacted by a person's fluency and confidence level. A person with strong oral communication skills will always speak with confidence and fluency. Additionally, a person cannot communicate eloquently if he lacks confidence ([Khan, 2015](#)). In comparison, all of these abilities, fluency, confidence, and a strong vocabulary, are interdependent, and if any of them is lacking, oral communication will suffer as well ([Pathan, 2013](#)). [Mari \(2016\)](#) bolsters the idea by stating that oral communication is dependent on vocabulary, confidence, and fluency.

### **Problem Formulation**

Due to their high anxiety levels, pupils have inadequate oral communication abilities, preventing them from learning new languages. This research takes an analytical method and finds the advantages of using technology to help ESL learners enhance their oral communication abilities. [Mari \(2016\)](#) conducted one study in which she utilized the five-point Likert scale to measure the oral communication abilities of randomly selected pupils. The scientists used a quantitative method and discovered that students in Pakistan struggle with weak oral communication skills, with the primary explanation

being an insufficient or non-existent usage of technology in colleges.

### **The Study's Objectives**

The following goals and objectives guided the research study:

- To ascertain how technology affects the oral communication abilities of ESL undergraduate students in Karachi; and
- To ascertain how professors perceive the usage of technology in ESL students' undergraduate courses.

### **Research Questions**

1. What effect does technology have on the oral communication abilities of ESL undergraduate students in Karachi?
2. How do professors assess the usage of technology by ESL students in their undergraduate studies?

### **Limitations**

- The research examined just undergraduate ESL students.
- This research focused only on oral communication. It made no mention of other modes of communication such as written, non-verbal, etc.
- This study focused only on professors and undergraduate students at private sector institutions in Pakistan.

### **Purpose**

The work makes an important addition to our understanding of new strategies for improving oral communication. Additionally, the research assessed numerous technological elements that affect undergraduate students' speech communication. The inquiry contributes significantly to Karachi's undergraduate oral communication education.

### **Glossary of Important Concepts**

- English as a second language (ESL) is the teaching of English in places where the native language is not spoken but where the native

language is in great demand internationally ([Khan 2015](#)).

- Technology is the practical application of scientific knowledge ([Khan 2015](#)).
- Oral Communication is the process of conveying thoughts orally ([Ayub & Lodhi, 2016](#)).

### Literature Review

This chapter presents the evaluation of the recent studies carried out in the context of technological impact on the development of the oral communication skills of ESL learners. The studies presented in the chapter lie in the period of the last five years, to present with the latest technological aspects.

The role played by technology in the development of oral communication skills received the attention of many scholars in the current era. One of the studies presented by [Sung et al. \(2016\)](#) argued that technology influences oral communication positively and in both formal and informal ways. However, another study by [Souzanzan & Bagheri \(2017\)](#) discussed that many topics of ESL, demanding action teaching, could not be taught using technology. The technology currently provides limited scope related to insights on a topic, and most of the topics are discussed in general (Souzanzan & Bagheri, 2017). Therefore, teachers should use technology after thorough research in the classroom and ensure that all the topics are covered in detail.

[Gikas & Grant \(2013\)](#) argues that the use of technology is necessary to improve the oral communication skills of ESL students. Otherwise, communicative competency cannot be achieved. [Ismaili \(2013\)](#) wrote that ESL learners feel more motivated when technology is used by the teachers in the classroom. They also argue that all the established educational institutions now use technology to make learning more effective ([Ismaili, 2013](#)). Therefore, it can be said that technology should be adopted by educational institutions because it positively influences the oral communication skills of the students.

Another important contribution to the field of technology and its influence on oral communication skills development was presented by [Sarudin & Noor](#)

([2013](#)). They argued that improvements in the communication abilities of the students cannot be achieved without the use of technology. The argument also received the support of [Mari \(2016\)](#), who discussed that technology provides a platform, which induces continuous learning in the classroom. In addition, technology provides various tools, such as PowerPoint presentations, and animations, which make learning more interesting. If the learning environment in the classroom is needed to be improved, technology must be used in routines and with priority by ESL students.

After performing a survey of 100 students, [Ella & Dapudong \(2014\)](#) concluded that one of the major reasons for poor-performing educational institutes is not making use of an adequate technological platform. They found that ESL learning couldn't be advanced without the use of technology. However, [Levy & Gertler \(2015\)](#) argued that technology is limited by poor internet connection, which negatively influences the motivation level of ESL students. Therefore, it must be ensured that internet connection is excellent to make learning more effective. In addition, the use of technology allows ESL learners to learn at home, but poor internet access can create many issues for them. Based on the arguments presented above, it can be said that applying technology in the classroom improves the oral communication skills of the students but is limited by technological issues.

Moreover, [Dornaletche, & Sahagún \(2014\)](#) stated that oral communication of ESL learners can be improved through technology in an appropriate way. For example, question/answer session through presentation can be used to induce interaction between the teacher and the students. With the passage of time, technology is also developing; therefore, it is the responsibility of the teacher to use an appropriate technological platform. The study of [Souzanzan & Bagheri \(2017\)](#) found that some teachers want to use technology in the classroom; however, the management does not support them. Hence, it is necessary that teachers should be provided with the support they need, as it makes the learning environment negative in the classroom.

Technology not only enhances the writing and reading abilities of the students, but a positive

influence on oral communication is also noticed. According to the study of [Mathew & Alidmat \(2013\)](#), technological tools are now developing at a rapid pace because many educational institutions are taking an interest in the development of their students. Due to this reason, competition between the educational institutes went tougher. Hence, to remain in the competition, it is now considered important that adequate technology is used to improve ESL learning ([Yahya, 2013](#)). Technology enables students to learn at a faster pace and improve their oral communication skills significantly.

Teachers using old and traditional ways of teaching ESL cannot generate the required results unless they use technology in the classrooms ([Al-Nouh et al., 2015](#)). The study of [Al-Nouh \(2015\)](#) also showed that ESL learners being taught with the help of technology are able to learn at a faster pace compared to others. The argument is also supported by [Souzanzan, & Bagheri \(2017\)](#), who wrote that favorable learning outcomes cannot be achieved without the use of technology, especially in the ESL learning environment. Based on the assessment of the above arguments, it looks imperative that the use of technology positively influences the learning of ESL students.

[Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal \(2013\)](#) explained in their study how technology impacts the language acquisition of ESL learners. They argued that if the teacher makes use of technology in the learning, it must be comprehensible and supported by a low effective filter environment. A low effective filter environment removes anxiety and increases the confidence level of the students ([Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2013](#)). However, the study of [Idrus & Salleh \(2017\)](#) represented that a low effective filter environment in a classroom cannot be achieved without the use of technology. Both the studies suggested classroom environment improvement methods but did not provide information on technology platforms. Therefore, this study reduced this gap by providing examples of established technological platforms.

One of the popular methods of differential instruction was provided in the study of [Mathew & Alidmat \(2013\)](#). According to them, this

technological tool enhances the learning process because it allows the understanding of sensitive topics effectively. If the views and opinions of the scholars related to the impact technology have on the learning environment are evaluated, mixed opinions are found. Some studies found that technology positively impacts on the learning environment. Whereas some of them argue that it is not possible. Technology-driven pedagogy has become a new norm in the schools, but still, studies are unable to identify the best technology platforms to improve oral communication skills. In some of the schools especially in the developing countries, the school management failed to use technology effectively ([Al-Qahtani, & Higgins, 2013](#)). While in some of the ESL educational institutes, teachers do not want to use the technology.

Based on the literature review presented above, it is found that technology positively impacts the learning outcomes of the students. However, it is limited by internet speed and lack of research on certain topics or areas of study. Moreover, no study presented the examples of best technological platforms, especially in the context of ESL oral communication learning. Thus, this study reduced this research gap by providing the benefits technology has on the oral communication skills development of ESL students. The study also addresses strategies to use technology without limiting the classroom learning environment.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research paradigm of this study is mixed, and the mixed method is utilized for the collection of results. Tools that have been adopted for the data collection are questionnaires and the interview questionnaire.

### **Population and Sample**

#### **Population**

The population of the study comprised of ESL students and teachers studying in the different universities of Karachi and the sample is 2 teachers and students of different universities in Karachi.

**Sample Technique**

Purposive sampling technique is used in the study.

**Sample Size**

Data for the survey was collected from 100 ESL students, while interviews were conducted from 3 teachers of 3 universities.

**Data Analysis**

**Questionnaire Analysis**

The quantitative analysis performed in this heading is carried out by looking at the responses of a Likert scale questionnaire. The responses were collected from 100 respondents through 15 statements, and all of them belonged to the ESL studies. Following results were obtained through questionnaire:

**Table 1.** Questionnaire Analysis

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
Oral communication skills can be improved by watching TV shows.	62	62	38	38						
Oral communication skills can be improved by watching Videos/Films.	28	28	47	47	25	25				
Communication is improved with the use of computer softwares like Duolingo, Google translator etc.	31	31	47	47	22	22				
Video calls enhances oral communication skills.	23	23	47	47	29	29	1	1		
Online audio and video tools (YouTube, Skype) polish communication skills.	34	34	42	42			14	14	10	10
Technology helps me in learning English language concepts.	89	89	11	11						
I believe that technology positively influences oral communication skills.	56	56	43	43	1	1				
Weak oral communication skills can be improved through technology.	35	35	34	34			19	19	12	12
I prefer using technology to enhance my speaking skills.	1	1	56	56			23	23	21	21
I think watching online videos in the English language motivates me to communicate verbally.	5	5	47	47	18	18	14	14	16	16
I really like studying English language communication skills using online learning websites	8	8	46	46	23	23	13	13		
I believe that the use of multimedia (i.e., computers and YouTube) is an excellent technique to improve oral communication skills.	78	78	22	22						
I think using technology in mastering oral communication skills is not necessary.							45	45	55	55

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
I believe that technology tools are not the best for improving my communication skills.					12	12	42	42	46	46
I think voice recorder is not a good way to improve my speaking skills.					33	33	46	46	21	21

- The results obtained through statement number one show that students are in favour to use TV shows in the majority with 62% strongly agreeing and 38% disagreeing.
- The results obtained through the second statement also that 65% of students supported that video improves oral communication, 28% strongly agree, 47% agreed and 25% have been neutral.
- The third statement shows that students want to use software to improve oral communication skills significantly as 31% strongly agreed, 47% agreed, and only 22% marked neutral.
- In the fourth response, 70% of students said that video calls improve oral communication skills, 23% strongly agreed, 47% agreed, 29% neutral, and 1% disagreed.
- The fifth question shows that 76% of respondents argued with the statement that online audio and video clips improve oral communication (34% strongly agreed, 42% agreed, 14% disagreed, and 10% strongly disagreed).
- While 100% of the respondents agree that technology improves oral communication skills, in the sixth questionnaire (89% strongly agreed, 11% agreed).
- In the seventh question also all the respondents said that technology improves oral communication skills because 56% strongly agreed 43% agreed 1% remained neutral.
- While in the eighth question also the respondents argue that oral communication skills can be improved through technology, 35% strongly agreed, 34% agreed, 19% disagreed, and 12% strongly disagreed.
- While 57% of respondents agreed that they prefer to use technology to improve their oral communication skills, 23% disagreed, 21% strongly disagreed.
- Watching online videos in the English Language improves verbal communication 5% strongly agreed, 47% agreed, 18% remain neutral, 14% disagreed, and 16% strongly disagreed.
- Moreover, in response to the statement that they enjoy English learning through online websites, while 8% strongly agreed, 46% agreed, 23% disagreed, and 13% strongly disagreed.
- 100% of respondents argued that the use of multimedia platforms improves oral communication skills 78% strongly agreed, 22% agreed.
- 100% of respondents argued that technology should be used to master oral communication skills 45% strongly agreed, 55% strongly disagreed.
- 88% of students said that technology is the best way to improve oral communication skills 12% remained neutral, 42% disagreed and 46% strongly disagreed.
- Lastly, 67% argued that the voice recorder should be used to improve oral communication skills 33% remained neutral, 46% disagreed, and 21% strongly disagreed.

**Interview Analysis**

Interviews were conducted of 8 teachers from 3 different universities of Karachi, Pakistan. Results obtained are analyzed in the form of different themes using content analysis.

The first two questions were designed to investigate the above-given three themes. In the responses received, it was observed that 5 out of the 8 teachers argued that they did not use projectors or any other multimedia projector in the classroom to teach English communication skills.

While the second theme was generated by looking at the third and fourth questions, which were related to the technologies, used to improve oral communication skills. In the responses received, teachers said that they want to use technology for teaching oral communication skills, but the management considers it an expensive option.

While the next two questions were designed to investigate the third theme, which inquired what types of technologies were preferred by teachers, investigated teachers said that they want to use projectors, YouTube videos, interactive films, Smartphone applications, and different software packages rapidly developing for educational purpose.

The last question was designed to look at the different ways to evaluate the recommendations. According to the teachers, videos teach students different ways of professional talking methods, which will help them in the future to get a job. Out of the eight teachers, six said that projectors should be used to teach the students with technology when they were asked questions related to recommendations on technology. 4 teachers used traditional whiteboard teaching methods to students, and 4 of them said that they use mixed methods to teach (classroom activities and traditional teaching both).

When the respondents have inquired about the reasons they want to use technology in the last question, all of them argued that technology enables interactive learning supported by creative and colourful activities. They believed that current teaching methods are not appropriate at all because they do not promote learning through projectors or any other technological tools in the universities. Therefore, all the respondents said that technology should be used.

## **Discussion**

The results obtained in the study can be used to present different arguments. For example, it is

observed that oral communication skills can be improved using technologies like video calls, projectors, software applications, and multimedia platforms from both interviews and questionnaires. The results obtained are related to the study of [Ayub & Lodhi, \(2016\)](#) also, however, in their study, the respondents did not participate in the activities, because the teacher did not use the technology platform, therefore, this study is more valid in terms of the findings.

Another finding in this study is that the management of some universities do not want to use technology to improve oral communication skills, because they consider it a hectic task. The findings go with the study of [Pathan, \(2013\)](#) in which teachers wanted to use technological tools but the management did not, resulting in poor oral communication skills.

It is observed that oral communication skills cannot be improved unless management wants to. In addition, it is also found that teachers want to engage students in speaking activities to improve their speaking abilities, but the management does not. Similar results can be found in the study of [Pathan, \(2013\)](#) and [Khan \(2015\)](#) whose respondents also wanted to use the latest technological tools in the classroom.

Through the interview and questionnaire analysis, it is found that oral communication skills heavily relies on the learning environment provided by the management, and in case it is not supported with the technology learning becomes slow and weak. In addition, English speaking accent is also developed by listening to native speakers on YouTube. Therefore, these were the reasons, due to which they wanted to use technology in the classroom. All the teachers investigated wanted to use it, and none of them disagreed. However, [Pathan, \(2013\)](#) and [Khan, \(2015\)](#) argued that the management is not good at maintaining the technology platform, therefore, teachers are found helpless in terms of adoption.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to find out the impact of technology on oral communication skills. In the results obtained it is noticed that students and teachers both said that oral communication skills can

be improved by using the technology but they are not used that much in the universities of Karachi. This study made use of questionnaire and interviews, to find out different reasons why technology should be used to improve oral communication skills of the ESL students.

After carrying out the investigation and looking at the responses of the respondents, it can be concluded that technology positively influences the oral communication skills of the students. Not only the students, but teachers investigated through interviews also support it. In most of the universities technology is not used for teaching oral communication skills to the ESL students because of which their speaking abilities are not good. However, after looking at the results, it can be said that technology (such as projector-based teaching, watching TV, films, and video calls) positively impacts oral communication skills of the ESL students. It is recommended that ESL studies should be improved by using technology as it would improve the oral communication skills. In addition, the education standard of Karachi will also improve with the use of technology.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations were undertaken before taking the interviews and questionnaire. Every individual's identity was kept hidden, and the responses were ensured through a mutual consent form signed between both the parties. It was ensured that no data is copy pasted in this study, and proper references are given to the arguments where used. Before the study, every student was informed about the questionnaire, its purpose and how to fill them. Before conducting the interviews, it was ensured that teachers are participating with the mutual consent rather than the forced participation.

### **Recommendations**

Future studies can investigate the role of technology in improving the listening and writing skills. Future studies can undertake a more detailed analysis to different methods of technologies which can improve oral communication skills in future. Future studies can investigate different ways to improve the oral communication skills of the ESL students.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### The Impact of Technology on Oral Communication Skills of ESL Learners at Undergraduate Level

It is argued that technology effects the development of the ESL learners' communication skills. So, this study investigates the role of technology in the development of oral communication skills. This questionnaire is a part of research & is designed to collect the data from ESL learners. Your participation is significant for this study. It is ensured that the information of the respondents will be kept confidential.

**Name (optional):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Department:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following statements and mark the most appropriate.**

S. No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Oral communication skills can be improved by watching TV shows.					
2	Oral communication skills can be improved by watching Videos/Films.					
3	Communication is improved with the use of computer softwares like Duolingo, Google translator etc.					
4	Video calls enhances oral communication skills.					
5	Online audio and video tools (YouTube, Skype) polish communication skills.					
6	Technology helps me in learning English language concepts.					
7	I believe that technology positively influences oral communication skills.					
8	Weak oral communication skills can be improved through technology.					
9	I prefer using technology to enhance my speaking skills.					
10	I think watching online videos in English language motivate me to communicate verbally.					
11	I really like studying English language communication skills using online learning websites					
12	I believe that use of multimedia (i.e., computers and YouTube) is					

S. No	Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	an excellent technique to improve oral communication skills.					
13	I think using technology in mastering the oral communication skills is not necessary.					
14	I believe that technology tools are not the best for improving my communication skills.					
15	I think voice recorder is not a good way to improve my speaking skills.					

### **Interview Questionnaire**

1. How do you keep your students engaged in the classroom?
2. Do you use multimedia projectors or any other technological tool to teach oral communication to the students?
3. What methods do you believe are not good for improving oral communication skills of the students?
4. What is the best activity related to technology for teaching oral communication skills?
5. Which technology would you recommend to improve oral communications of the students?
6. What methods do you use to get students to feel more comfortable in the classroom?
7. What are the impacts of technology on the oral communication skills of ESL students?
8. Do you prefer using technology in the classroom? Why/why not?