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UTILIZATION OF MOBILE APPS IN THE INTEGRATIVE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING COMPETENCE

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Annotation

This article explores the role of mobile applications in the integrative development of speaking competence among EFL learners, particularly future English teachers. As mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) continues to gain traction, integrating mobile apps into language instruction offers new opportunities for fostering communicative competence, fluency, and learner autonomy. The study analyzes how selected speaking-focused apps (e.g., ELSA Speak, Speakly, Mondly) support oral language development through real-time feedback, pronunciation modeling, and interactive tasks. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the research evaluates the linguistic and motivational outcomes of integrating mobile apps into a speaking-focused curriculum. Findings reveal that app-based learning enhances pronunciation, confidence, and speaking fluency when combined with classroom instruction. Additionally, students report higher motivation and engagement due to the flexibility and personalization these apps provide. The article concludes by recommending pedagogical strategies for the effective integration of mobile apps into EFL programs, emphasizing the need for blended learning environments that merge digital tools with communicative methodologies.

Keywords: Mobile-assisted learning, speaking competence, EFL, pronunciation, app integration, fluency, learner autonomy.

Introduction. In the digital era, language learning has rapidly expanded beyond the traditional classroom setting, incorporating a variety of technological tools to support learner autonomy, engagement, and performance. Among these tools, mobile applications have emerged as a powerful force in enhancing language skills, particularly speaking competence one of the most challenging aspects for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Speaking requires real-time processing, accurate pronunciation, and effective interactional strategies, all of which can be difficult to master in limited classroom hours. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) offers a solution by providing flexible, personalized, and interactive learning experiences that extend beyond institutional boundaries [3]. Recent advancements in educational technology have produced mobile applications specifically designed to improve speaking skills. Apps like *ELSA Speak*, *Speechling*, *HelloTalk*, and *Mondly* offer learners opportunities for repetition, feedback, speech recognition, pronunciation modeling, and conversational simulations. However, to be most effective, these tools must be integrated purposefully into broader teaching strategies rather than used as stand-alone solutions. This calls

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for an integrative approach blending mobile app usage with communicative language teaching (CLT), task-based learning (TBL), and reflective feedback to create a seamless learning ecosystem that targets oral competence development holistically.

Despite the popularity of mobile apps among learners, the pedagogical integration of these tools remains underexplored in teacher education and applied linguistics research. Many institutions still struggle to align app-based learning with curricular goals, especially in contexts where oral proficiency is a core requirement for future teachers. The question is not whether mobile apps are useful but how they can be systematically embedded into the language learning process to support fluency, accuracy, and pragmatic competence. This article addresses that gap by examining how selected mobile apps contribute to the integrative development of speaking skills in EFL contexts. The study focuses on their role within a blended learning framework, evaluating their effectiveness through empirical data, learner feedback, and practical classroom implementation. The ultimate aim is to provide evidence-based recommendations for incorporating mobile apps meaningfully into teacher training programs, ensuring that digital innovation aligns with pedagogical integrity.

Literature review. The evolution of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has significantly transformed how learners interact with language, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Kukulska-Hulme and Shield argue that mobile technology offers learners new modes of collaboration, flexibility, and personalization key elements for enhancing speaking competence [4]. Burston provides a comprehensive overview of implementation studies and highlights that mobile apps are most effective when integrated into structured learning environments, rather than used independently [1].

Godwin-Jones emphasizes that speech-focused mobile apps such as ELSA Speak and HelloTalk create authentic, low-pressure environments for learners to practice pronunciation and fluency [2]. Stockwell points out that mobile platforms support on-the-go repetition and microlearning, which are crucial for developing oral automaticity [7]. Rosell-Aguilar further introduces a taxonomy for evaluating speaking apps, emphasizing user feedback, interactivity, and content authenticity [6].

However, Viberg and Grönlund caution that while learner motivation tends to increase with mobile app usage, pedagogical support and integration are often lacking [8]. Reinders and Benson advocate for research-informed frameworks that link MALL with classroom instruction, especially in teacher training programs [5]. Overall, the literature suggests that mobile apps offer meaningful opportunities for oral language practice, but their full potential is realized only when systematically embedded within integrative pedagogical models that align digital interaction with communicative and reflective teaching strategies.

Research methodology. This study employed a quasi-experimental design combined with qualitative data collection to examine the impact of mobile apps on the speaking competence of EFL learners. A total of 36 English pedagogy students from a teacher training institute were divided into two groups: an experimental group (n=18), which used mobile apps alongside classroom instruction, and a control group (n=18), which followed a traditional speaking-focused curriculum without digital tools. The intervention lasted for eight weeks, during which the experimental group engaged with three mobile apps *ELSA Speak, Mondly,* and *HelloTalk* as part

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of a blended learning program. Learners completed weekly tasks that integrated app-based pronunciation training, dialogue simulations, and peer interaction via mobile platforms.

Speaking proficiency was measured using pre- and post-intervention oral tests, evaluated by a rubric covering fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interactional strategies. In addition, semi-structured interviews and weekly reflection journals were collected from the experimental group to capture student experiences and engagement with the apps. Quantitative data were analyzed using paired t-tests to assess speaking improvement, while qualitative data were coded thematically to identify patterns in learner perceptions, motivation, and self-regulated speaking behavior.

Results and discussion. The findings of the study revealed that the integration of mobile apps into speaking-focused instruction had a significant positive impact on the oral performance of the experimental group. Quantitative results from the pre- and post-tests showed a notable improvement across all four assessed criteria: fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interactional competence.

On average, the experimental group's speaking scores improved by 23%, compared to 9% in the control group. The largest gains were seen in pronunciation (+27%) and fluency (+25%), reflecting the specific strengths of mobile apps like ELSA Speak, which offers AI-based pronunciation correction and real-time feedback. A paired t-test confirmed the statistical significance of the improvements in the experimental group ($p < 0.05$).

Qualitative data supported these findings. Reflection journals indicated that learners appreciated the flexibility and privacy of practicing speaking without classroom pressure. Many students reported feeling more confident and engaged, noting that mobile apps allowed for self-paced repetition and exposure to authentic phrases and interactive dialogues. Interview responses echoed these sentiments, with several participants mentioning that apps "helped [them] correct mistakes instantly" and "made speaking practice feel like a game." Additionally, classroom observations noted more active participation and spontaneous speaking from experimental group members during group discussions and presentations.

In contrast, the control group showed modest improvement, mainly in vocabulary range and grammatical accuracy, but continued to struggle with real-time interaction and pronunciation challenges. Furthermore, the integration of mobile apps, when combined with classroom practice, led to greater engagement, increased confidence, and more substantial gains in speaking competence, demonstrating the value of a blended, integrative model in language teacher training.

Table. Comparison of speaking skill improvement (%).

Speaking Criteria	**Experimental Group (%)**	**Control Group (%)**	**Difference (%)**
Fluency	+25%	+8%	+17%
Pronunciation	+27%	+7%	+20%
Vocabulary Use	+18%	+10%	+8%
Interactional Competence	+22%	+11%	+11%
Overall Average	+23%	+9%	+14%

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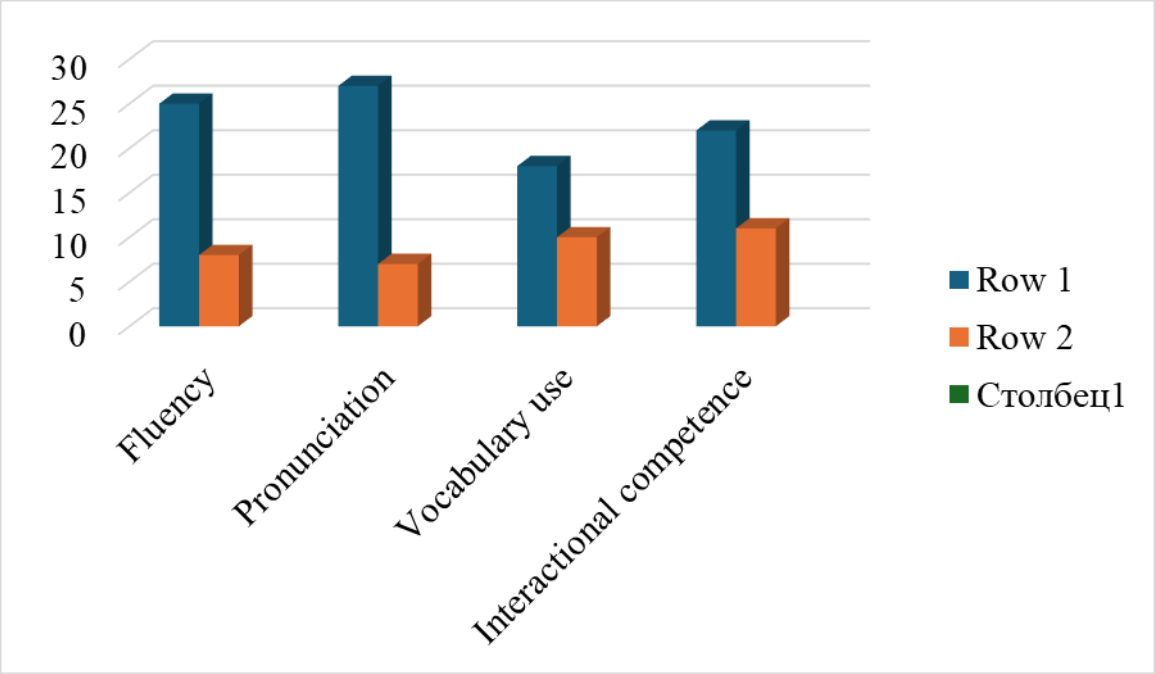
This table clearly shows that the experimental group, which used mobile apps within an integrative model, outperformed the control group across all criteria especially in fluency and pronunciation. The data support the claim that app-supported learning significantly enhances key components of oral competence in EFL learners. The table also highlights the substantial benefits of integrating mobile apps into speaking instruction. The most significant improvements were observed in fluency and pronunciation skills directly supported by features such as real-time feedback and speech modeling in the apps used. These results suggest that mobile-assisted practice not only enhances measurable performance but also boosts learner confidence, offering a flexible, engaging, and effective supplement to traditional classroom speaking activities.

Figure. Comparison of speaking skill improvement.



The bar graph provides a clear visual comparison of speaking skill improvements between the experimental and control groups. It highlights the significantly higher gains in fluency and pronunciation achieved through mobile app integration. This supports the conclusion that combining digital tools with classroom instruction leads to more effective oral competence development.

The results underscore the effectiveness of integrating mobile apps into speaking instruction for EFL learners. The experimental group showed substantial gains, particularly in fluency and pronunciation areas directly targeted by app features such as real-time feedback and speech recognition. These findings align with prior research emphasizing the value of MALL in promoting self-paced, interactive learning. Moreover, learner reflections revealed increased motivation, confidence, and engagement, indicating that mobile apps not only improve performance but also positively influence learner attitudes. In contrast, the control group, limited to traditional methods, showed modest progress, mainly in vocabulary and grammatical accuracy.

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These outcomes suggest that mobile app usage, when aligned with communicative tasks, can effectively support the integrative development of speaking competence in teacher education contexts.

Conclusion. This study confirms that mobile applications, when purposefully integrated into language instruction, significantly enhance the speaking competence of English pedagogy students. The experimental group, which utilized speaking-focused apps alongside classroom tasks, showed greater improvement in fluency, pronunciation, and interactional competence compared to the control group. These gains highlight the effectiveness of a blended learning model that combines digital flexibility with pedagogical structure. Beyond measurable improvements, students reported increased confidence, motivation, and willingness to engage in oral communication critical qualities for future language teachers. The study reinforces the view that mobile apps should not be used in isolation but as part of an integrative instructional approach. When aligned with communicative goals and reflective teaching strategies, mobile tools can greatly enrich the language learning process. Teacher education programs are encouraged to adopt such hybrid models to better prepare students for the dynamic, tech-integrated classrooms of the XXI century.

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