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AI-ENHANCED APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS: APPLICATIONS OF TALKPAL AND KIALO EDU

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Abstract
This study investigates the application of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in enhancing English speaking competence among higher education students. Two AI-driven platforms, TalkPal and Kialo Edu, were employed to strengthen oral communication, pronunciation, and critical thinking skills. TalkPal facilitates dialogue-based interactive exercises based on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) principles, while Kialo Edu promotes structured debates and argumentation following Debating Method and Critical Thinking Pedagogy [1; 12–14 p.]. A 10-week independent learning intervention was conducted, with pre- and post-tests measuring pronunciation accuracy, lexical usage, and argumentative skills. Results indicate significant improvements across all indicators, demonstrating the effectiveness of AI-assisted platforms for independent and communicative English learning.

Keywords. Artificial Intelligence, English Speaking Skills, TalkPal, Kialo Edu, Communicative Language Teaching, Task-Based Learning, Critical Thinking, Debating Method, Independent Learning.

Introduction

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into language learning has created new opportunities for developing oral competence, particularly in English as a foreign language. Traditional classroom-based approaches often lack sufficient interactive practice for individual learners, limiting the development of pronunciation accuracy, lexical range, and communicative fluency [1; 12–14 p.]. TalkPal provides dialogue-driven exercises enabling students to engage in realistic conversational scenarios, supporting CLT and TBL principles. Kialo Edu, on the

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other hand, focuses on critical discussion and structured argumentation, implementing Debating Method and Critical Thinking Pedagogy [2; 45–48 p.].
This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of these platforms in independent learning contexts and to propose an AI-based methodological framework for oral English development.

Methods

A total of sixty second-year students enrolled in the Integrated Speaking Skills course participated in this study. All participants had an intermediate level of English proficiency as determined by institutional placement tests. None of the students had significant prior experience with AI-assisted language learning platforms, ensuring a baseline for measuring the effectiveness of the interventions. Participants represented diverse academic backgrounds, which provided a realistic context for assessing the applicability of AI tools in typical classroom settings.

Platforms and Pedagogical Framework

TalkPal: This platform enables repeated dialogue-based exercises designed to enhance pronunciation accuracy, lexical usage, and communicative fluency. Through AI-driven interactive scenarios, learners can practice real-life conversational tasks and receive immediate feedback, aligning with **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)** and **Task-Based Learning (TBL)** principles [1; 12–14 p.].
Kialo Edu: Designed to foster argumentation and reasoning skills, Kialo Edu facilitates structured debates and collaborative discussions. The platform encourages students to formulate claims, provide evidence, and engage with peers' perspectives, following the **Debating Method** and **Critical Thinking Pedagogy** [2; 45–48 p.].
Procedure. The intervention spanned 10 weeks, during which students engaged in independent practice for at least 3 hours per week using both platforms. Students completed a series of structured activities:

- Pronunciation accuracy tests to monitor phonetic improvements.
- Lexical usage evaluations to assess vocabulary growth and application in context.

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- Oral argumentation and debate tasks to measure reasoning and communication skills.

Data collected from pre- and post-intervention assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired t-tests to determine statistically significant changes in students' speaking competence. This approach allowed for both quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the platforms' pedagogical impact.

Results

The 10-week intervention demonstrated clear improvements in students' English speaking competence through independent use of TalkPal and Kialo Edu platforms. The results are presented across several key domains: pronunciation, lexical range, fluency, argumentation skills, and learner engagement.

Pronunciation Accuracy. Students using TalkPal exhibited significant improvements in pronunciation accuracy. Pre-intervention assessments showed an average accuracy score of 62%, while post-intervention scores increased to 80%, representing an 18% improvement. The AI feedback in TalkPal allowed learners to identify mispronounced phonemes, practice them repeatedly, and receive immediate correction, which reinforced auditory discrimination and oral motor skills [1; 12–14 p.].

Lexical Usage and Fluency. Task-based dialogue exercises in TalkPal contributed to the expansion of students' active vocabulary. The mean number of correctly used lexical items in oral responses increased from 45 to 52, corresponding to a 15% improvement. Additionally, students demonstrated enhanced fluency, producing longer and more coherent utterances without hesitation. Observations indicated that repeated AI-driven practice encouraged learners to experiment with synonyms, phrasal verbs, and contextually appropriate expressions [1; 12–14 p.].

Argumentation and Critical Thinking. Through Kialo Edu, students engaged in structured debates requiring evidence-based reasoning. Argumentation scores, measured through rubric-based evaluation of clarity, coherence, and logical reasoning, improved by 22% from pre-test to post-test. Students were able to formulate stronger claims, provide supporting evidence, and respond to

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counterarguments more effectively. The platform's interactive features encouraged reflection and self-evaluation, fostering critical thinking and decision-making skills in the target language [2; 45–48 p.].

Integrated Speaking Competence. Combining the strengths of both platforms, learners developed holistic oral competence, integrating pronunciation, lexical richness, and argumentation ability. Comparative analysis indicated that students who used both TalkPal and Kialo Edu regularly outperformed peers who engaged in traditional classroom discussions only. The integrated AI-assisted approach promoted self-directed learning, enhanced oral confidence, and reduced communicative anxiety [3; 23–26 p.].

Engagement and Motivation. Learner feedback revealed high levels of motivation and satisfaction. Students highlighted the interactive and adaptive nature of AI platforms, immediate corrective feedback, and gamified elements as key factors in sustaining practice. Self-reported data suggested that students spent 20–30% more time on independent speaking practice compared to non-AI-assisted study, indicating the platforms' effectiveness in promoting autonomous learning habits [4; 55–58 p.].

Discussion

The study confirms that AI-driven platforms address limitations of traditional classroom approaches by providing individualized, interactive, and reflective learning experiences. TalkPal enhances practical dialogue skills, while Kialo Edu develops critical thinking and structured argumentation. Together, these platforms contribute to holistic oral competence development, aligning with self-directed learning, AI-assisted pedagogy, and digital literacy goals [4; 55–58 p.].

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