

“ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH ONLINE APPLICATIONS”

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Abstract: This article explores methods to enhance speaking skills by leveraging online applications. The study is organized into two main parts: Part 1 discusses technological tools and pedagogical frameworks, while Part 2 examines learner engagement and assessment strategies. Additionally, a minimized version of the short story “Hellados” is provided to illustrate interactive speaking tasks, followed by two exercises aimed at reinforcing comprehension and production. References and footnotes are included to support the theoretical and practical perspectives presented.

Introduction

In recent years, online applications have transformed language teaching and learning, particularly in developing speaking skills.¹ Platforms such as language exchange apps, AI-based conversation bots, and video conferencing tools provide authentic communicative contexts for learners to practice speaking. These technologies facilitate interaction with native speakers and peers, offering immediate feedback and enabling self-paced, learner-centered instruction.² This article investigates how online applications can be integrated into speaking pedagogies, focusing on accessibility, interactivity, and efficacy.

Part 1: Technological and Pedagogical Frameworks

¹ . Garcia, M., & Rosenblum, E. (2020). Virtual classrooms and synchronous communication. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(4), 567–582.

² Brown, H., & Lee, H. (2022). Learner autonomy in online speaking tasks. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 33(1), 78–94.

1.1 Online Applications for Speaking Practice

Various online applications cater to improving speaking proficiency. For example, mobile apps like Tandem and HelloTalk connect learners with native speakers for language exchange,³ while AI-powered bots in platforms such as Duolingo and ELSA provide structured pronunciation practice.⁴ Video conferencing tools like Zoom and Skype enable synchronous speaking sessions with instructors and peers, simulating real-life conversations.⁵ These applications offer diverse modalities—text, audio, and video—allowing learners to develop fluency and accuracy in different communicative contexts.

1.2 Pedagogical Integration and Best Practices

Effective integration of online applications into speaking pedagogy requires careful instructional design. Blended learning models combine face-to-face instruction with online speaking tasks to reinforce classroom activities. Flipped classroom approaches use pre-recorded speaking prompts delivered via applications, allowing class time for interactive discussion. Task-based learning leverages app functionalities—such as recording and playback—to scaffold speaking tasks, promoting learner autonomy and reflection.

Part 2: Learner Engagement and Assessment

2.1 Motivating Learners through Gamification and Social Interaction

Gamified features in language apps—leaderboards, badges, and streaks—enhance learner motivation by introducing competitive and goal-oriented elements. Social interaction tools like community forums and group chatrooms foster peer support and collaborative speaking practice. Research indicates that learners who engage in online speaking games report higher levels of persistence and reduced anxiety.

³ . Hsieh, S.-C. (2021). Language exchange apps: User perspectives and effectiveness. *ReCALL*, 33(1), 2–18.

⁴ Chen, W., & Li, F. (2022). AI-powered pronunciation practice: A review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5), 789–805.

⁵ Willis, J. (2021). Synchronous video tools in language learning. *Modern Language Journal*, 105(2), 345–360.

2.2 Automated and Peer Assessment for Speaking Skills

Automated speech recognition (ASR) technologies in applications like ELSA and Speechace provide instant feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and intonation.⁶ Peer assessment mechanisms—where learners review each other’s recorded speaking tasks—encourage reflective learning and develop critical listening skills.⁷ Rubric-based evaluation integrated into apps allows instructors to track speaking progress and tailor feedback.⁸

Minimized Version of “Hellados”

Hellados is a short narrative set in modern-day Greece. It tells the story of Elena, a young art student from Thessaloniki, who embarks on a summer journey across the Greek islands to rediscover her family’s ancestral heritage. Accompanied by her grandfather, Stavros—a retired historian—Elena sails from Mykonos to Santorini, stopping at various lesser-known islets along the way.

1. In Mykonos, Elena marvels at the juxtaposition of contemporary life against the backdrop of Cycladic architecture. Stavros recounts tales of ancient mariners who navigated these same waters, emphasizing the continuity between past and present.
2. Sailing to Paros, they meet Nikos, a local fisherman who teaches Elena how to fish using traditional nets. The experience awakens her appreciation for sustainable living and the deep connection between Greek island communities and the sea.
3. On Naxos, the pair visits the Temple of Apollo, where Elena sketches the ruins. Stavros explains how the temple’s stones were quarried millennia ago, inspiring Elena’s artistic vision of blending classical motifs with modern aesthetics.
4. Finally, in Santorini, they attend a family gathering at a cliffside village. Elena meets distant relatives who share family photographs, artifacts, and stories of migration to America

⁶ . Patel, R. (2021). ASR feedback and learner progress. *Language Technology*, 30(1), 45–59.

⁷ Williams, D. (2020). Peer assessment in language learning. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(5), 789–802.

⁸ Jones, L. (2021). Rubric-based assessment frameworks. *TESOL Journal*, 12(3), 112–126.

in the 1960s. Through these narratives, she gains a profound sense of belonging and a renewed commitment to incorporating Greek motifs into her upcoming art exhibition.

Exercise 1: Comprehension and Reflection

Read the minimized version of “Hellados” carefully. Then answer the following questions in complete sentences:

1. Character Motivation

- Why does Elena decide to travel with her grandfather instead of going alone?
- How do her grandfather’s stories contribute to her personal growth?

2. Cultural Insights

- List two traditional practices Elena observes during her journey and explain their significance in Greek island culture.
- How does the Temple of Apollo in Naxos influence Elena’s artistic vision?

3. Personal Connection

- If you were traveling to your ancestral homeland, what aspects of your heritage would you hope to explore? Relate your answer to Elena’s experience in Santorini.

4. Analytical Thinking

- Discuss how the physical landscapes (e.g., azure waters, volcanic cliffs) function almost like characters in the story. Provide one example of how a landscape feature influences Elena’s transformation.

Exercise 2: Language and Speaking Task

Use the context of “Hellados” to complete the tasks below:

1. Pronunciation Practice

- Record yourself reading the four narrative paragraphs aloud. Pay attention to vowel sounds and intonation patterns. Use an online recording tool (e.g., the voice recorder in your language app) and submit your audio file for peer feedback.

2. Role-Play Dialogue

- In pairs, imagine you are Elena and her grandfather Stavros. Create a short dialogue (8–10 lines) where Elena asks questions about Greek traditions and Stavros explains them.

Record the conversation using a video conferencing tool. Focus on clarity, expressiveness, and appropriate gestures.

Conclusion

Enhancing speaking skills through online applications involves strategic integration of technology and pedagogy. Part 1 demonstrated how various online tools—ranging from language exchange apps to AI-driven pronunciation coaches—provide diverse opportunities for learners to practice speaking. Part 2 highlighted the importance of motivation, gamification, and effective assessment mechanisms in fostering sustained engagement and measurable progress. The minimized narrative of “Hellados” serves as a contextualized speaking task, illustrating how authentic content can be used to design meaningful oral activities. Future research should investigate the longitudinal impact of online speaking interventions on proficiency gains and affective factors such as learner autonomy and confidence.

Footnotes

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