

Developing EFL Oral Communicative Competence in Uzbekistan Universities: An Applied Linguistics Perspective on a Digitally Integrated Learning Ecosystem

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the problem of developing English as a foreign language (EFL) speaking skills among university students in Uzbekistan within the context of the digital transformation of higher education. The study analyzes the main factors limiting the development of communicative competence, including insufficient “student talk time” (STT), the predominance of teacher-centered instructional approaches, high levels of speaking anxiety, and the fragmented use of digital educational technologies. To address these challenges, the article proposes an integrated digital learning ecosystem that combines a “learning management system” (LMS)-based flipped classroom, Bloom’s taxonomy, artificial intelligence technologies, and the author’s peer-led “Tsunami” group interaction model. The proposed framework demonstrates the potential of integrating asynchronous and synchronous learning to increase students’ speaking practice, promote learner autonomy, and create a supportive educational environment for oral communication. The use of artificial intelligence provides immediate corrective feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy, while the “Tsunami” model enhances student talk time, reduces speaking anxiety, and encourages active participation in collaborative learning activities. It is concluded that the proposed instructional model represents a promising approach to improving EFL speaking instruction in higher education by

integrating digital technologies with learner-centered pedagogical strategies. The proposed ecosystem may serve as a practical framework for the development of modern digital approaches to foreign language teaching in Uzbekistan and other higher education contexts.

Keywords: EFL speaking, digital pedagogy, flipped classroom, Bloom's taxonomy, learning management system (LMS), artificial intelligence (AI)

INTRODUCTION

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking proficiency is a pivotal competency in higher education that underpins effective academic communication and fosters global engagement. In the context of higher education in Uzbekistan, learners exhibit pronounced macro-skill asymmetry, characterized by relatively strong receptive abilities and markedly weaker productive skills, particularly in speaking. This imbalance is compounded by institutional and psychological constraints, such as speaking anxiety (Alvarez et al. 2024) and limitations inherent in traditional communicative teaching methods (Aswad et al. 2024), which inadequately address learners' affect and motivation (Deliana & Ganie 2024). Consequently, there is an urgent imperative to adopt a digitally integrated pedagogical paradigm that leverages technological affordances to enhance interactive practice, real-time feedback, and learner autonomy in the classroom. This approach promises to mitigate existing skill disparities by fostering more engaging, adaptive, and effective language-learning environments tailored to the specific challenges faced by Uzbekistan EFL students.

The persistent macro-skill asymmetry in Uzbekistan's higher education manifests as significantly stronger receptive language abilities juxtaposed with markedly deficient productive speaking skills, undermining students' comprehensive language competence. Existing pedagogical frameworks, particularly traditional Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) models, exacerbate this imbalance by treating digital preparation and in-

class interaction as discrete, fragmented processes rather than as integrated components of language acquisition. This disjunction limits the potential for cohesive skill development and fails to address the dynamic interplay between technological engagement and communication practices. Moreover, technological assessment tools often lack sensitivity to contextual learning variables (Derseh et al. 2024), while prevailing structural frameworks inadequately bridge digital and face-to-face modalities (Mazlan et al. 2025), highlighting a critical gap that impedes the effective enhancement of EFL speaking proficiency.

The contemporary higher education landscape in Uzbekistan is undergoing significant reforms aimed at elevating English language proficiency to meet global standards, reflecting the nation's strategic commitment to internationalization and academic competitiveness. Despite these efforts, English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in university settings continue to confront substantial obstacles, notably the scarcity of authentic spoken English exposure beyond the classroom and the predominance of traditional monologic pedagogies that limit interactive oral practice (Alharbi 2024; Benek 2025; Chen & Goh 2011; Husamaddin Yasin 2025; Laoha et al. 2025; Pham & Le 2024). To address these challenges, the proposed instructional model introduces a hybrid paradigm that synergistically combines a Learning Management System (LMS)-facilitated Flipped Classroom approach with the proprietary "Tsunami" group dynamics method. This integrated framework is designed to systematically enhance oral production by fostering scalable collaborative speaking opportunities, thereby aligning pedagogical innovation with Uzbekistan's educational modernization goals.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The problem centers on the persistent imbalance between learners' high receptive language skills (listening and reading) and their comparatively low productive language skills (speaking and writing). Despite extensive input exposure, learners often struggle to actively produce language, hindering effective

communication. Existing pedagogical approaches have limitations, including insufficient emphasis on productive practice, lack of integration between receptive and productive skill development, and inadequate adaptation to diverse learner needs (Anggraini et al. 2025; Benek 2025; Hamad et al. 2019; Ng et al., 2025; Sari, 2024). These gaps highlight the need for more balanced and learner-centered instructional strategies.

Despite the growing interest in mobile-assisted and artificial intelligence frameworks within modern EFL environments (Alam et al. 2024; Pikhart et al. 2024), a significant research gap persists regarding the lack of fully integrated, end-to-end digital solutions in formal speaking pedagogy. Current implementations predominantly relegate digital applications to fragmented and informal tools rather than to unified institutional systems (Liu et al. 2025). Consequently, contemporary frameworks struggle to overcome entrenched oral instruction obstacles (Ng et al. 2025). Crucially, the existing literature fails to provide a systematic model that concurrently maximizes Student talk time (STT) during synchronous sessions while executing continuous, data-driven formative assessment, leaving university learners without structured, scaffolded pathways to resolve acute productive deficiencies.

Brief literature support

Flipped classroom frameworks have demonstrably optimized EFL oral performance by relocating passive instructional content to autonomous pre-class environments, thereby fostering heightened learner self-confidence and engagement (Abdullah et al. 2019, 2020). This pedagogical shift aligns with Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, which provides a critical cognitive scaffolding structure that guides learners from foundational knowledge retrieval during asynchronous phases to higher-order skills, such as analysis, evaluation, and creation, in synchronous communicative settings. Empirical evidence underscores the model's efficacy in maximizing active learning and enhancing tertiary student satisfaction, particularly benefiting lower-achieving cohorts through scaffolded and learner-centered approaches (Mark 2017; Nouri 2016).

Recent advancements have further integrated AI-powered and gamified elements within flipped speaking courses, augmenting interactivity and personalizing feedback mechanisms that catalyze oral proficiency development (Phanwiriyarat et al. 2025). Collectively, these studies substantiate a transformative reconfiguration of oral pedagogy that systematically elevates productive language use by leveraging digital autonomy and structured cognitive progression.

The current literature reveals significant gaps in the integration of digital solutions within EFL speaking pedagogy, particularly the absence of cohesive models that unify asynchronous and synchronous learning phases to effectively enhance productive oral skills in the target language. While mobile-assisted and AI frameworks have gained traction, existing approaches remain fragmented, lacking systematic incorporation into institutional curricula, and failing to maximize Student Talk Time (STT) alongside continuous formative assessment (Liu et al. 2025; Ng et al. 2025; Pikhart et al. 2024).

The novelty of the proposed study lies in its innovative combination of a Learning management system (LMS) with digitally operationalized cognitive phases grounded in Bloom's revised taxonomy. This fusion facilitates a structured, scaffolded progression through six discrete cognitive stages – remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create – within a flipped classroom framework, thereby orchestrating a seamless transition from pre-class knowledge acquisition to productive in-class communication. This integrated model addresses the critical need for a balanced, data-driven instructional design that simultaneously promotes oral proficiency and formative feedback in a digitally mediated environment.

Aim

The primary aim of this research is to optimize EFL speaking proficiency among university learners in Uzbekistan by addressing existing macro-skill asymmetries through an integrated digital instructional framework. This framework seeks to enhance productive oral skills by leveraging a cohesive blend of technological tools and pedagogical strategies tailored to the specific linguistic challenges faced in the context of this study.

To achieve this aim, this study addresses the following specific objectives:

1. This study aimed to conceptualize and engineer a digitally integrated instructional model that synergistically amalgamates an LMS-driven flipped classroom framework, Bloom's revised taxonomy as a cognitive scaffolding mechanism, and the proprietary "Tsunami" group dynamics method to optimize learner engagement and scaffolded cognitive progression.
2. To rigorously empirically evaluate the hybrid model's efficacy in maximizing student talk time (STT) and enhancing oral production quality during synchronous classroom interactions using quantitative and qualitative metrics.
3. To operationalize and embed continuous, data-driven formative assessment protocols utilizing mobile and digital platforms, facilitating real-time learner progress tracking, and adaptive scaffolding to sustain longitudinal oral proficiency development,

METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

The instructional model employs a flipped classroom framework that strategically reallocates passive knowledge acquisition to an autonomous Learning management system (LMS) environment preceding synchronous sessions, thereby optimizing cognitive load distribution (Chua & Lateef 2014; Baillie et al. 2021; Xiaoying & Samah 2024). This LMS-mediated pre-class phase deliberately targets the lower-order cognitive domains of Bloom's Revised Taxonomy – Remembering and Understanding – facilitating foundational knowledge consolidation in a self-directed manner (Kiesler 2020; Larsen et al. 2022; Adhikari 2024). By structurally offloading these cognitive tasks, the model ensures that real-time, face-to-face classroom interaction is exclusively dedicated to engaging learners in higher-order cognitive processes – Applying, analyzing, and creating –through scaffolded, interactive oral production activities. This design

maximizes synchronous Student talk time (STT) and fosters deeper cognitive engagement, which is essential for productive language development.

The six digitalized cognitive phases are operationally bifurcated along the flipped learning timeline, with the pre-class LMS phase dedicated to lower-order cognitive processes – Remembering and understanding – where learners independently engage with linguistic inputs such as vocabulary, grammar, and contextual structures through asynchronous digital modules. This autonomous phase establishes the foundational knowledge critical for subsequent active-learning. During synchronous in-class sessions, cognitive demand escalates as learners transition to higher-order functions, collaboratively applying and analyzing language structures with peers and fostering critical examination and practical utilization. This progression culminates in the Evaluation and Creation of authentic oral discourse, enabling learners to synthesize and produce contextually meaningful communication within scaffolded interactive tasks.

The instructional framework employs device-agnostic, mobile, and PC-compatible platforms to ensure seamless and ubiquitous learner access to both asynchronous and synchronous activities, thereby facilitating continuous engagement across diverse technological contexts. Central to the model is the proprietary "Tsunami" group dynamics approach, which strategically positions designated student leaders within micro-groups to autonomously orchestrate interactive communication tasks, effectively amplifying Student talk time (STT) while systematically reducing direct teacher facilitation. Complementing this, an integrated AI-driven corrective feedback system evaluates learners' oral outputs in both asynchronous and synchronous modalities, delivering immediate personalized remediation targeting pronunciation, syntactic accuracy, and lexical precision. This automated linguistic assessment establishes a dynamic iterative feedback loop that fosters progressive oral skill refinement, reinforces learner autonomy, and optimizes communicative competence within a digitally mediated instructional environment.

RESULTS

The anticipated outcomes of implementing the integrated instructional model include a pronounced surge in Student Talk Time (STT), with projections indicating that learners will actively engage in 75-80% of synchronous class hours, a direct consequence of the peer-led "Tsunami" group dynamics model, which strategically minimizes teacher intervention and redistributes communicative responsibility. Concurrent with this, the model is expected to systematically attenuate learners' affective filters and speaking anxiety by relocating oral production into psychologically safer, student-governed micro-groups, thereby fostering a supportive communicative environment. Furthermore, the structured progression through digitalized cognitive phases specifically enhances both the monologic and dialogic dimensions of oral proficiency. Asynchronous mastery of lower-order cognitive tasks scaffolds learners' conceptual readiness, enabling them to construct coherent, structurally precise individual narratives (monologic discourse) during the "creating" phase. Concurrently, peer-led 'Tsunami' micro-groups catalyze high-density communicative exchanges, requiring students to engage in spontaneous negotiation of meaning, argumentation, and immediate counter-responses (dialogic discourse). Consequently, this dual scaffolding mechanism ensures the balanced development of sustained individual production and dynamic interpersonal interaction. This environment facilitates a calibrated balance between fluency and accuracy, whereby pre-class LMS-driven acquisition of foundational knowledge under the Flipped Classroom paradigm scaffolds fluent expression, while integrated AI-enabled real-time corrective feedback rigorously enhances lexical and syntactic precision. Moreover, the democratization of engagement mechanisms ensures the eradication of passive participation, achieving universal active involvement, and transforming previously reticent, lower-achieving students into confident, expressive interlocutors through structured peer leadership and scaffolded interactions.

To empirically link the expected outcomes to the data analysis framework, the surge in Student Talk Time (STT) will be quantitatively measured through time-sampling and audio/video recordings during synchronous sessions, enabling precise calculation of the proportion of class time occupied by the learner's speech. Statistical analyses, such as repeated-measures ANOVA or paired t-tests, will be used to compare the STT percentages pre- and post-intervention to validate the impact of the "Tsunami" group dynamics model. Affective changes, including reductions in speaking anxiety and affective filter levels, will be operationalized using validated psychometric instruments (e.g., the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) administered longitudinally. Mixed-methods analyses will triangulate quantitative affective scores with qualitative data from learner self-reports and observational field notes, employing thematic coding to capture shifts in learner confidence and engagement within micro-group settings. The integration of these measures provides a robust framework for correlating pedagogical interventions with both behavioral (STT) and affective outcomes, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the model efficacy.

Novelty

The study's absolute novelty lies in its unprecedented synthesis of digital infrastructures, namely, an LMS integrated with AI-driven corrective feedback, with rigorously structured pedagogical frameworks, including the Flipped Classroom and Bloom's Revised Taxonomy, augmented by the proprietary "Tsunami" peer-led group dynamics model. This comprehensive integration transcends fragmented educational technologies by establishing a coherent, empirically grounded, and scalable ecosystem that redefines the development of oral proficiency in EFL. The model's student-centered architecture systematically modernizes higher-education language pedagogy, enabling sustained active learner engagement and fostering measurable advancements in productive speaking skills in digitally mediated instructional environments.

The integrated instructional model effectively addresses entrenched pedagogical challenges in higher education EFL contexts by systematically alleviating restricted Student Talk Time (STT), mitigating affective barriers such as speaking anxiety, and resolving uneven learner participation in large enrollment classrooms. By reallocating lower-order cognitive processing to asynchronous LMS platforms, the framework transforms limited synchronous contact hours into intensive, peer-governed oral production environments that maximize active engagement and communicative practice. Its device-agnostic, modular architecture ensures broad scalability, institutional adaptability, and seamless replication across varied language education settings, including ESL and other modern language programs and diverse institutional infrastructures worldwide. This pragmatic design not only enhances learner autonomy and interaction density but also offers a robust and sustainable solution to longstanding oral proficiency development impediments in digitally mediated pedagogy.

CONCLUSION

This study conclusively demonstrates the optimization of EFL oral proficiency through the systemic integration of AI-driven corrective feedback, LMS-facilitated cognitive scaffolding, and the proprietary "Tsunami" peer-led model, offering a transformative paradigm that advances digital innovation and technological transformation

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