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Exploring the Impact of Interactive Edutainment Technology on the Speaking Competence of College Students

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Abstract

The growing presence of digital tools in education has reshaped how learners engage with language, particularly in contexts where spoken English receives limited attention outside the classroom. This study explores the impact of interactive edutainment technology on the speaking competence of college students, focusing on how game-based tasks, real-time feedback, and short, engaging activities influence their oral performance. The intervention was carried out with a group of tertiary-level learners who engaged daily with a digital edutainment application designed to improve pronunciation, fluency, and spontaneous speech. Drawing on pre-test and post-test results, along with learner reflections and observational notes, the study finds that interactive features create a learning environment in which students feel less intimidated by errors and more willing to experiment with language. The regular use of gamified speech tasks appears to strengthen confidence and reduce hesitation, especially among students from non-English backgrounds. The findings indicate that edutainment technology, when thoughtfully integrated into the curriculum, can serve as a meaningful supplement to traditional pedagogy, providing learners with opportunities for consistent practice that would otherwise be difficult to access. The study also highlights the need for future research on long-term retention and comparative digital tools.

Keywords:

edutainment, speaking competence, tertiary students, digital learning, interactive technology.

Understanding Edutainment in the Digital Language Classroom

The rise of digital learning platforms has pushed educators to rethink traditional classroom models, especially in language education where engagement and exposure are essential. Edutainment an approach that blends instructional content with elements of entertainment has become increasingly relevant in higher education because it adapts to the learning habits of contemporary students. In a world where young adults are constantly interacting with interactive media, audio-visual content, and mobile applications, edutainment creates a bridge between academic expectations and learners' digital experiences. As Marc Prensky notes, today's students "think and process information fundamentally differently" because they have grown up surrounded by technology (*Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*). When this understanding is ap-

plied to the language classroom, edutainment serves as more than a playful tool; it becomes a pedagogical strategy that sustains attention, simplifies complex concepts, and encourages active participation.

In digital language learning environments, edutainment formats such as gamified tasks, storytelling modules, and interactive feedback systems promote continuous engagement without overwhelming learners. For many tertiary students who often feel intimidated by speaking tasks, the informal and enjoyable nature of edutainment reduces anxiety and fosters a supportive environment. Thus, it becomes an effective medium for cultivating both confidence and competence in spoken English.

Speaking Competence and the Challenges of Tertiary Learners

Speaking in a second language remains one of the most challenging skills for tertiary-level learners, particularly in contexts where English is seldom used outside academic spaces. Many college students struggle with pronunciation, limited vocabulary, and hesitation caused by fear of judgment. These difficulties are compounded for learners from rural or non-English-medium backgrounds, who often associate speaking English with social pressure. As David Nunan states, "spoken language is notoriously difficult to master" because it requires real-time processing, confidence, and cultural awareness (*Practical English Language Teaching*). In higher education settings, where students are expected to participate actively in discussions, presentations, and interviews, speaking proficiency becomes a crucial academic and professional asset.

However, traditional teacher-centred classrooms rarely provide the sustained practice necessary for oral development. Students might understand grammar and vocabulary yet remain hesitant speakers due to insufficient opportunities for meaningful communication. Tertiary learners often express discomfort with large-group speaking tasks, fear of making mistakes, and lack of models for natural speech. These challenges highlight the need for innovative pedagogical interventions that offer safe, repetitive, and enjoyable practice. Digital edutainment tools respond to this gap by offering structured speaking opportunities that build fluency gradually while reducing anxiety.

Role of Interactive Technology in Language Development

Interactive technology has reshaped the way students encounter, process, and produce language. With features such as voice recognition, instant feedback, gamified scoring, and personalised learning pathways, digital tools enhance the conditions under which speaking skills can develop. Interactive learning aligns with Vygotsky's social constructivist view that knowledge is constructed through engagement and mediated tools, as he argues that learning occurs "through the interaction between the learner and the environment" (*Mind in Society*). In the digital age, this environment is enriched by applications that simulate real-world communication scenarios, making technology a dynamic partner in language acquisition.

For speaking development, interactive tools provide opportunities for repeated practice without the emotional risk associated with face-to-face mistakes. Students can record their voices, review feedback, compare models, and attempt tasks multiple times until they feel confident. This fosters autonomy and reduces the fear often associated with oral performance. Moreover, technology encourages multimodal learning by integrating audio, visuals, and text, which deepens comprehension and supports pronunciation, rhythm, and fluency. In tertiary education, where time and resources are often limited, interactive technology ensures that learners have continuous access to speaking practice outside the classroom, thus extending and enriching the learning process.

Need for the Study

Many college students from rural backgrounds face challenges in mastering spoken English despite regular language classes. Traditional teaching patterns, though effective in strengthening grammar and writing, rarely create space for natural conversation. Students hesi-

tate to speak even when they know the right words. This gap between classroom learning and real-life speaking demands a more engaging methodology. Edutainment tools help bridge this gap by weaving learning into enjoyable tasks, enabling learners to participate actively instead of being passive recipients.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine whether interactive edutainment tools can enhance the speaking competence of college students.
2. To understand the level of student involvement during technology-supported speaking activities.
3. To identify the specific components games, role-plays, audio tasks that contribute most to learner improvement.
4. To observe changes in learners' confidence, fluency, and willingness to speak.

Methodology

The study was designed as a small-scale experimental investigation using qualitative and descriptive methods. The focus was on observable changes in learner behaviour and their engagement with edutainment tools. The intervention was carried out over several weeks, during which students participated in a range of technology-enabled speaking activities. Data were collected through classroom observation, short oral tasks, learner reflections, and informal feedback sessions.

Sample Description

A total of **30** undergraduate students from Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar College, Usilampatti**,** participated in the study. The students belonged to different departments but shared a common difficulty in speaking English with ease. Most had studied in Tamil-medium schools and therefore lacked regular exposure to spoken English. The group size was intentionally kept small to ensure one-to-one support and to closely track each learner's progress.

Tools and Edutainment Resources Used

1. **Mobile-based speaking apps** that provided short prompts and instant feedback.
2. **Role-play applications** designed to simulate real-life situations such as booking tickets, interviewing, and introducing oneself.
3. **Gamified challenges**, such as timed storytelling, word-building games, and picture-based speaking prompts.
4. **Short video clips** followed by spontaneous speaking tasks.
5. **Voice-recording assignments**, enabling students to listen to their own speech and observe their progress.

These tools were chosen not for their technological complexity but for their ability to encourage natural, pressure-free communication.

Procedure

The intervention was carried out in a gradual and student-friendly manner so that the learners did not feel pressured or anxious about speaking in English. Each week was planned with a specific objective, allowing the students to move from basic comfort-building tasks to more challenging speaking activities. The teacher monitored the entire process closely, offering guidance without disturbing the natural flow of student interaction.

Week 1: Students were first introduced to simple mobile-based speaking applications. The focus of this week was familiarity and comfort. Learners explored basic prompts such as describing their morning routine, narrating an incident from their childhood, or speaking about a favourite place. The activities helped them break the initial hesitation, as the apps provided a private space where they could speak without fear of being judged. Some students replayed their own recordings multiple times to correct themselves voluntarily.

Week 2: Gamified speaking tasks were added in the second week to keep the learners engaged. Students worked in pairs and small groups to complete word-building and picture-prompt challenges. The competitive element encouraged even the quiet learners to participate actively. Many students reported that the games helped them "forget" the fear of grammar mistakes, allowing them to speak more spontaneously.

Week 3: The third week shifted the focus to digital role-play. Learners practised real-life communication scenarios such as shopping conversations, asking for directions, booking tickets, talking to a doctor, or appearing for a short interview. These tasks helped them understand the functional use of English in everyday settings. Students enjoyed acting out roles because the tasks felt practical and relatable.

Week 4: In the fourth week, students prepared short video reflections on given themes. They also used voice-recording features to analyse their own pronunciation and fluency. Many learners confessed that they had never heard their own English speech so clearly before. This self-awareness encouraged improvement without external pressure. Some students voluntarily attempted multiple retakes until they were satisfied with their clarity and expression.

Week 5: Group speaking activities were introduced during the final phase. Discussions, mini-presentations, and collaborative storytelling tasks created a supportive environment for learners who were usually reluctant to speak. With the foundation built during the earlier weeks, even the shyest learners found it easier to participate. The classroom atmosphere became lively, with students encouraging one another and sharing ideas freely.

Throughout the five-week intervention, the teacher acted more as a facilitator than an evaluator. Corrections were given only after the completion of each task so that the flow of speech was not interrupted. The emphasis remained on natural communication, confidence building, and meaningful interaction rather than on error-free performance.

Observations and Findings

The use of edutainment tools noticeably changed the classroom environment. Students who rarely spoke began participating willingly because the activities felt less academic and more engaging. Shy learners found comfort in using mobile apps before attempting face-to-face speaking. Several students reported that the gaming elements made them forget their fear of mistakes.

The progress was evident in three areas

Confidence: Students approached speaking tasks with less hesitation.

Fluency: Their speech became more natural, with fewer pauses.

Vocabulary: Interactive tasks introduced new words in meaningful contexts, helping retention.

Some students even continued using the apps outside the classroom, proving that technology can motivate voluntary learning when used meaningfully.

Conclusion

The experience with 30 students at Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar College demonstrates that interactive edutainment technology can genuinely influence speaking competence in a positive way. When learning becomes playful and personalized, students lose their fear and begin to see English not as a burden but as a skill they can enjoy and master. This study suggests that edutainment tools should be integrated more consciously into college classrooms, especially for learners who lack exposure or confidence. The results reaffirm that technology, when combined with human interaction and supportive teaching, can reshape language learning in meaningful ways.

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