

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta pedagogická

Katedra anglického jazyka

Diplomová práce

VYUŽITÍ TECHNOLOGIÍ K PODPOŘE ŘEČOVÝCH DOVEDNOSTÍ

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Plzeň 2022

University of West Bohemia

Faculty of Education

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Thesis

**USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S SPEAKING
SKILLS**

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Plzeň 2022

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci vypracoval/a samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

V Plzni dne 30. června 2022

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Jméno Příjmení

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the supervisor of my graduate thesis Mgr. Gabriela Klečková, Ph.D., for her never-ending guidance and patience throughout the past two years. Furthermore, I would like to thank my parents and my partner for their support and encouragement during my university studies.

ABSTRACT

Baloun, Tomáš. University of West Bohemia. June, 2022. Using technology to improve student's speaking skills. Supervisor: Mgr. Gabriela Klečková Ph.D

The thesis is concerned with the topic of using technology to promote speaking skills. In particular, special attention is dedicated to ways of teaching with technology, such as CALL and MALL and applications and platforms which are thought to improve learners' speaking accuracy. The thesis includes theoretical background, which introduces the reader to information regarding the theory behind creating a speech and the methodology of teaching speaking. Moreover, a description of the research is presented. The research occurred by observing individual language learners who tested five tools in a language school. The aim was to determine which of the tools are suitable for promoting speaking accuracy based on the subjective opinion of learners in reflective discussions and standardised testing, which occurred before and after the research. Learners' reflective questionnaires accompany the results of the research. The results indicate that most of the tools included in the research are suitable for promoting speaking accuracy. However, before incorporating any tool into their teaching, teachers should test them beforehand and determine if it demonstrably improves the efficiency or effectiveness of the language lesson.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many people think of language in terms of four skills – speaking, reading, writing and listening. Speaking skills belong to the category of productive skills, along with writing skills. The other group, labelled as receptive skills, included reading and listening. Speaking is also one of the first skills that young babies develop. For many people, speaking fluently and with high intelligibility is the goal of learning a language. Therefore, most people measure one's language abilities by how well they speak the language and how effectively they interact with people without considerable effort. However, speaking with ease is not so simple as Thornbury (2019) suggests that there is much more to speaking than forming grammatically correct sentences and pronouncing them. The difficulty of speaking, unlike other skills, is that it takes place in real-time, and there is only a limited time for detailed planning.

One common concept that naturally puts speaking on the pedestal is 'English speakers.' Usually, users of L2 are referred to as 'speakers' of such language, which only adds to the importance of speaking skills. Knowing this, it is hard not to understand that the goal of a majority of language learners is to speak effortlessly and with ease.

With the world constantly evolving and new technology being thrust into the world every week, it was only a matter of time until new applications and platforms started to impact the area of education. This steady evolution was accelerated by the COVID-19, which turned the existing teaching and learning systems on their head and made them irrelevant for about two years. Humankind found a way through, and modern technology became part of the life of every learner in the Czech Republic and dozens of countries worldwide. Platforms such as Zoom or Google Classroom became a part of everyday routine. Applications of any kind helped support distant learning so that those two years when people were forced to spend most of their time inside would not come to waste.

What was once a slow and steady evolution became a revolution as platforms were integrated into the learning process in a matter of days without adequately testing them and knowing how to use them efficiently. Therefore, principles and rules on using individual tools in the classroom were defined later.

One of the areas that recorded a severe decline was spoken interaction, as talking to a person inside a frame on a Zoom session feels unnatural even today, let alone in 2020

when the pandemic started. Nevertheless, teachers often did not know how to choose a practical application and use it adequately. Therefore, the aim was to develop tools that would naturally support language learners' speaking skills. For this reason, I chose to write this thesis to explore ways modern technology can promote speaking skills inside and outside the classroom.

One of the most substantial reasons I chose this topic was one of the courses in the Department of English at the Faculty of Education at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen. The content of the course revolved mainly around digital tools which can be used for language teaching purposes. Throughout the course, about thirty tools were introduced and evaluated. It was discovered that there are many brilliant applications and platforms, but they can also hinder the learning process instead of promoting it.

In the upcoming chapters, I focus on the theory behind speaking as one of the critical language skills, the efficient ways of teaching speaking and how technology can be integrated into the teaching of speaking skills with the help of research based on observations of learners.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter presents the theoretical background on using technology to promote speaking skills. It summarises speaking conditions for speaking production and cognitive demands, and affective factors for speaking a language. Special attention is dedicated to speaking competence and teaching methods with and without technology. Various approaches, such as CALL and MALL, are discussed in the case of using technology to promote speaking skills.

Speech Conditions

Speech Production

Speaking is so natural for us that we sometimes take it for granted and do not appreciate the complexity of how a speech is produced. Knowing how speech production occurs is essential for teachers to develop their learners' speaking skills. So, the question is, 'what is involved in speaking?' Thornbury (2019) explains that one particular thing about speaking that causes problems, especially for learners with less proficiency, is its linear structure. Words follow words, and phrases follow phrases. Moreover, speaking is often spontaneous and unpredictable, resulting in a situation where the planning of one utterance may overlap with the production of the previous one.

Speech production goes through multiple stages to produce something sensible and understandable. According to (Thornbury, 2019), these are Conceptualisation and Formulation, Articulation, Self-monitoring, and Repair. The stage of conceptualisation and formulation is where mapping out the speech occurs. This step involves making strategic choices about the level of discourse, grammar complexity, and choosing appropriate vocabulary items. For example, in English, utterances tend to have a part structure where the first part is what we are talking about, the topic, and the second part is what we want to say about the topic, the comment. Generally, the topic is the information that has already been mentioned. After successfully choosing the level of discourse, appropriate grammar, and vocabulary, the concept needs to be formulated. The words need to be glued together by adding appropriate grammatical markers, such as articles, auxiliary verbs, and word endings. Also, for each word, appropriate pronunciation needs to be chosen. (Thornbury, 2019, p. 4)

After completing this stage, the formulated concept needs to be articulated. The use of speech organs ensures this: “A stream of air is produced in the lungs, driven through vocal cords and shaped by, among other things, the position and movement of the tongue, teeth, and lips. Consonant sounds are produced primarily by the action of the tongue and lips. Consonant sounds are determined by the point at which the air stream is obstructed.” (Thornbury, 2019, p. 5) At the same time as the articulation is in process, continuous changes and loudness, pitch direction, tempo, and pausing serve to organise the sounds into meaningful word forms and utterances.

Finally, almost every language speaker commits errors; many might be unintentional, while the lack of knowledge might cause some. The ‘Self-monitoring and repair stage’ of speech production deals with issues like these. This stage might abandon the message altogether or fix incorrect word choices. It also enables competent speakers to make running repairs immediately or by ‘retracing-and-repairing’ of the utterance. (Thornbury, 2019, pp. 5-6) The complex process aims to develop speaking skills from controlled to automated processing and achieve fluency. Other researched factors contributing to fluency are filling the pauses or managing turn-taking.

The speech does not happen in a vacuum; therefore, certain conditions may influence the speech. Thornbury (2019) proposes that the speech’s conditions greatly influence a speaker’s degree of fluency. He names three significant categories of factors - cognitive, affective, and performance. Cognitive factors are mainly concerned with the phenomena of familiarity. Firstly, the more we are familiar with the topic, the easier a speaking task becomes. Therefore it is much easier to talk about something personal or closely relatable than something completely unknown. On a similar note, it is essential to be familiar with the genre as it might prove difficult to give a lecture if a speaker is not familiar with its features. Lastly, if a speaker is familiar with the interlocutors, it becomes easier for him as there is likely to be some shared knowledge. (Thornbury, 2019, p. 25)

Burns (2016) refers to cognitive factors as conceptual preparation, which involves selecting a topic or information. Familiarity with the topic and genre is critical at this stage “ideas must be formulated, mapped on to the specific grammar and vocabulary speakers have available to them and strung together a speech appropriate to the situation. (...) speakers must have control of the sounds and intonation of the language such that they can be understood by listeners” (Burns, 2016, p. 2). Many challenges, such as insufficient

vocabulary, grammar knowledge, or unfamiliar pronunciation, may arise throughout this process. These issues, and many more, are expected by the teacher to discover during the 'Needs Analysis.'

Burns (2019) describes that affective factors refer to people's feelings or reactions to particular social situations. In the same vein, she adds that additional stress is virtually inevitable for many learners when speaking in second or other languages. The teacher's role is to offset the effects of stress. Thornbury (2019) shares the opinion of Burns as he states, "being put on the spot can cause anxiety which will have a negative effect on performance, likewise, knowing (or believing that you are being evaluated can be prejudicial" (p. 25).

The last category is performance factors. These are concerned with the mode of the speech, meaning if one is speaking face-to-face or over the telephone where eye contact and gestures are non-existent. Also, the degree of collaboration is vital. As stated above, giving a presentation is significantly more challenging if unfamiliar with the genre. However, giving a presentation in pairs or a group makes the task easier as one can count on peer support. Other significant factors are discourse control, planning and rehearsal time, time pressure, and environmental conditions, such as poor acoustic conditions in the classroom (Burns, p. 26).

Speaking Competence

Speaking Competence According to CEFR

According to the British English website, the prominent publisher of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (APPENDIX A), which offers various high-stakes test exams which are widely accepted around the globe explains that "CEFR makes it easy for anyone involved in language teaching and testing, such as teachers or learners, to see the level of different qualifications. It also means that employers and educational institutions can easily compare our qualifications to other exams in their country" (Cambridge English.com, n.d).

Richards (2015) explains that CEFR distinguishes language knowledge into six levels of achievement. These levels are then divided into three broad divisions from the lowest level (A1) to the highest (C2). These levels assess knowledge across all four

language skills, but only the scale dedicated to the outcome of speaking skills is relevant for our purposes.

Each level of the CEFR scale defines goals (or skills) that speakers on each level are expected to obtain to be eligible to determine their level of speaking competence. For example, intermediate B1 speakers should converse effortlessly on familiar topics and maintain a conversation or discussion. It is understood that they might encounter some cases of misunderstanding caused by insufficient knowledge. These speakers can express their surprise, happiness, sadness and others. (Richards, 2015, p. 422)

When looking at speakers with an elementary speaking skills level, they are much less expected to be labelled A1 speakers. They can introduce themselves and use basic greeting and leave-taking expressions. They can ask other people about their feelings and react to the news. At the other extreme of the spectrum, C2 level speakers can converse effortlessly and quickly in every situation and topic. They are not limited in their linguistic knowledge. (Richards. 2015, p. 422)

Brown (2004) suggests that one can be labelled to possess speaking competence when he/she can imitate a word, a phrase or even a sentence. The competent speaker should also produce stretches of language in a narrow band of grammatical, phrasal, lexical, or phonological relationships. Moreover, a competent speaker can maintain social relationships that include the transmission of information and is ready to lead the conversation. In sum, the competent speaker can develop oral production, including speeches and presentations but can also interact with other speakers, respond to them, have small talk, and make and take requests in a given language.

Richards (2015) implies that “CEFR is increasingly being used as a reference framework for the design of courses and published materials“ (p. 565).

Speaking Competence According to RVP

Rámcový vzdělávací program (RVP) is a main curricular document in the Czech schooling system that defines the highest level of education. In the area of second and other languages, it defines that, after completing the first level of primary school, the speaker of L2 should be able to hold simple conversations and exchange personal information concerning his family, school, free time, and other topics. The speaker can also ask and answer simple questions about his life. (RVP ZV, 2021, p. 25)

After completing the second primary school level, the speaker should ask basic questions and adequately react in formal and informal situations. He should be able to talk about his family, friends, school and interests, and also be able to narrate a short story or event and describe people, places and things from his everyday life. (RVP ZV, 2021, p. 27)

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are such strategies that language speakers use to communicate effectively and almost effortlessly. These play a crucial role in case of insufficient vocabulary or grammar knowledge. Thornbury (2019) lists circumlocution, word coinage or foreignising as the most common strategies. Besides these, he names approximation language switch and use of paralinguistics. Thornbury (2019) declares that a “repertoire of communication and discourse strategies can prove very useful for learners in that it allows them to achieve degree of communicative effectiveness beyond their immediate linguistic means” (p. 30).

Adrian Palmer and Maryann Christison (2018) imply that communication strategies in the English language are vital when communication breaks down and speakers have to negotiate a mutual understanding with their partner. Communication strategies serve learners to express themselves even though some misunderstandings or difficulties might occur. The authors provide a list of strategies almost identical to Thornbury. Palmer & Christison (2018) provide pedagogical implications for communication strategies as they divide them into two major categories’ Strategies for getting help with input’ and ‘Strategies for making adjustments in the output’.

All the strategies focus on what learners do when they receive input and how to control the input. The first category includes these strategies: ‘Learning how to interrupt, ‘Learning how to ask for repetitions’, Learning how to ask for definitions and meanings or words and phrases and lastly, ‘Using recognisable sounds and words’. In sum, “These strategies are all direct toward the goal of managing and understanding input and of evaluating their use” (Palmer & Christison, 2018, p. 1632).

The second category includes strategies such as: ‘Learning how to express appreciation’, ‘Learning how to hesitate’, ‘Learning how to use lexical categories’ and ‘Learning new words and phrases’. The authors imply that instead of employing an extensive list of strategies in the lesson, teachers should work with a limited number of

strategies, and these should be incorporated into an existing framework to help learners meet their learning goals. (Palmer & Christison, 2018)

Fluency

As generally understood implied, fluency and accuracy are two dimensions of spoken English when describing oral language ability. Cambridge Dictionary defines fluency as “the ability to speak or write a language easily, well and quickly” (Cambridge Dictionary, n. d.).

A more in-depth description of fluency is provided by Richards (2015), who defines it as the ability to maintain the flow of the speech without pauses or breakdowns. Fluency develops when learners have considerable knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and fixed expressions. These items are recalled automatically and do not distract the speaker from searching for them. (Richards, 2015, p. 426)

Byrne (2009: 79) (in Richards, 2015, 426) suggests that fluency thrives through repeating an activity. Similar recommendations are provided by Nation (1989) as Richards reports that fluency can be achieved when learners repeat the oral activity with time pressure. Richards explains that Nation’s findings might lead to long-term improvements in both fluency and accuracy.

Accuracy

Accuracy, the second dimension of spoken English, is defined as “the ability to do something without making mistakes” (Cambridge Dictionary, n. d.). Richards (2015) agrees that while accuracy can address different aspects of spoken English, it mainly entails grammar, pronunciation and word choice. Besides, a definition of accuracy seems somewhat ambiguous due to the current status of English and the number of variations of English. Richards (2015) explains that “when English is being used as an international language, and both interlocutors are second-language speakers of English, the question arises as to whose norms are considered appropriate” (p. 427).

Richards (2015) sees the development of language accuracy in correcting learners’ errors. This occurs either through peer correction, teachers’ correction, or correcting whoever made the error. Richards suggests that indicating that a learner made an error is crucial in learning any skill.

Teaching Speaking Skills

Richards (2015) outlines that the teaching of speaking skills has played a significant role since the late nineteenth century. While this remained true until the present, the nature of speaking skills and their teaching has recorded a substantial shift throughout past centuries. Richards (2015) reports that “under the influence of audiolingualism and similar grammar-based method (...) speaking usually meant ‘repeating after teacher, reciting a memorised dialogue, or responding to a mechanical drill’” (p. 407). Since the 1970s, speaking skills have shifted from memorising and drilling to authentic oral interaction. Richards (2015) adds that discourse analysis, conversation analysis and corpus analysis were the main reasons teaching speaking started to focus on teaching specific features of spoken English, and oral interaction was realised. Richards sees the emergence of the English language as a lingua franca as why the target of learning started to be questioned. As understood today, second language learners may not always seek to master a native-like variety of English even when interacting with native speakers. Their main aim is to achieve intelligibility and fluency.

As mentioned above, the fast-paced world of the 21st century places high demands on English Speakers, mainly because English has become the most influential language globally and lingua franca for many learners. Maryann Christinson & Christel Broady (2018) explain that speaking English gives learners numerous advantages, such as the opportunities to study at the University or apply for jobs or positions that might advance their careers. Also, non-native speakers have outnumbered native speakers four to one. This demonstrates that the approaches to teaching speaking that worked very well in the 1970s, when globalisation was very limited, have very little use now and need to be tweaked or entirely replaced.

Richards (2015) suggests that each genre of spoken English (small talk, transactions, conversation, discussion, and presentation) should be taught with different teaching techniques; there is no universal technique.

Generally speaking, teachers’ role in the speaking lesson is the lead learners from controlled practice, where they usually imitate a model, to free practice, where they are encouraged to express their ideas. It is understood that there are activities that aim at improving accuracy, such as drills or dialogue and, on the other hand, activities that

actively contribute towards developing fluency, such as role-play, games, pair work, group work and others. (Byrne, 1986, p. 5)

The goal of teaching speaking skills is believed to be an appropriate level of speaking competence, as introduced above. Ur (1995) suggests that speaking activities are successful when learners' oral participation exceeds that Teacher-Talking-Time. This is because, in many situations, the teachers' speech is prevalent. Ur understands that speaking competence strongly develops when learner participation in activities is even, and learners are adequately motivated to speak. Lastly, speakers' speaking competence is usually recognised through the accuracy and fluency of their speech.

As for how speaking skills should be taught, Scrivener (2011) proposes a basic sequence a speaking lesson could follow. It starts with setting tasks, planning the speaking and rehearsing the speaking. These are pre-speaking steps. After these, a speaking activity is done, and feedback is given. The activity is repeated with improvements based on the feedback to improve accuracy and fluency.

Thornbury (2019) provides an overview of criteria that enhance the quality of speaking tasks. He suggests that the content of the task should motivate learners to participate and be productive during the activity. Also, language use should be autonomous, and the use of L1 should be decreased. Moreover, any speaking task should be purposeful; in other words, it should have a clear outcome, and the language used in the task should be helpful in real-life interactions. Thornbury also mentions that speaking tasks should be interactive, and even formal, monologic speaking tasks should be conducted to offer at least some degree of interaction. Additionally, the challenge factor can be precious as learners' sense of achievement after completing a challenging task can propel them to work even more.

However, Thornbury (2019) recognises that "while learners should be challenged, they also need to feel confident that, when meeting those challenges and attempting autonomous language use, they can do so without too much risk" (p. 91). This results in the need for authenticity in speaking tasks as learners need to experience a quality of communication that is similar or identical to the communication outside the classroom.

The Teaching Speaking Cycle

Burns (2016) argues that speaking skills are essential, and learners and teachers value them highly. However, tasks aiming at improving skills without adequate support are insufficient as speaking requires the teacher to guide and intervene. She proposes using a Teaching Speaking Cycle (APPENDIX B) developed by Goh and Burns (2012), consisting of seven stages. These stages are steps in the process of development of speaking skills. Burns suggests that one stage does not necessarily equate to one lesson, but this cycle proves to be very helpful for teachers in structuring speaking lessons and activities.

The first stage focuses on developing learners' metacognitive awareness about a particular task or language development in speaking. The second stage involves input and guides and scaffolds the learner's gradual progress towards making the task. As for scaffolding, it generally means that learners are given the support that helps them complete a task that they would not be able to do without the support. (Burns, 2016, pp. 6-8)

In the third stage, learners perform a task with their existing strategies and knowledge and work towards fluency. This stage usually entails speaking in small groups where the teacher can notice problems and effective interaction. (Burns, 2016, p. 8)

The fourth stage picks up where the third is finished, focusing on the learners' language, pronunciation, discourse management skills, and strategies. This stage provides essential speaking practice but is given very little attention inside the classroom as the main focus is on language production. During this stage, helpful scaffolding techniques are used, and learners gain confidence in their skills. The tasks could be split into several parts so that the learners will not feel under pressure. As well to explicit attention to language and other items, the fourth stage changes the aim of the learning from fluency to accuracy as tasks are repeated and problematic parts are made clear. Here, the learners should notice and analyse their errors. (Burns, 2016, p. 9)

The fifth stage of the Teaching Speaking cycle revolves around thoroughly practising newly gained skills. As learners have analysed their errors in the previous stage, they are ready to try the task again with improved accuracy. Another option is introducing a task according to the learners' interest to feel comfortable speaking.

The sixth stage of the cycle involves much reflection on what was learned so far, and learners are encouraged to self-regulate their learning by evaluating the preceding stages. It is recommended that such reflection be carried out individually or in pairs,

reducing stress, and learners feel more comfortable assessing their performance. (Burns, 2016, p. 10)

The seventh stage is where the teacher provides feedback on learners' performance and valuable peer feedback. Learners' are welcome to express their feelings during the activity and assigned grades. (Burns, 2016, p. 10)

In the words of Burns, The Speaking Cycle "offers a systematic way to sequence and conduct learning activities that support learners' development of the ability to manage the cognitive, linguistic, social and affective aspects of speaking" (Burns, 2016, p. 10).

Issues in Teaching Speaking

Ur (1995) says learners have problems finding motives to speak, formulating opinions or relevant comments; low or uneven participation. This is likely to be caused by the tendency of some learners to dominate in the group; mother-tongue use – widespread in less disciplined or less motivated classes, where learners find it easier or more natural to express themselves in their native language. Moreover, Ur (1995, p. 121) suggests that the most prolific issues in teaching speaking are the following: fear of making mistakes, losing face, criticism, shyness, and nothing to say.

Nunan (2018) points out that speaking in L2 in the early stages of development is an emotional experience. The enormous amount of time needed to develop rudimentary speaking skills can demotivate the learners. Learners who produce strange-sounding utterances might feel embarrassed and threaten their identity. Moreover, misunderstandings can be humiliating for the learners.

Weiszová (2019) suggests, "Other issues that might arise in language lessons are the use of L1 and the amount of speaking time offered to individual learners. We have to keep in mind that it is more natural and easier for children to communicate in their mother tongue. It is impossible to eliminate L1 completely" (p. 8). Alternatively, she proposes using L1 when checking for comprehension after giving instructions. Additionally, some learners are destined to dominate the speaking activities; more reserved pupils naturally might not have as many opportunities.

One of the biggest obstacles in teaching and learning speaking is the issue of pronunciation. Judy B. Gilbert (2018) explains that until recent years, teacher training did not involve pronunciation, and as a result, teachers feel unprepared and opt for somewhat discouraging approaches to teaching pronunciation, such as minimal pair drills. In other

words, learners feel defeated and hopeless as minimal pairs are among the most challenging areas in learning pronunciation. Gilbert suggests at least four challenges in teaching pronunciation, which could also be understood as issues in teaching speaking. Among these, she includes time pressure, fear of making mistakes, and loss of motivation.

Nunan (2018) suggests that “young learners have to be motivated by evidence that their attempts to speak are assisting them in the achievement of short-term goals“ (p. 1929).

Other issues arise from Alqathani’s (2019) study, which discovered the uselessness of the traditional methods. As Alqathani explains, “Statistical data confirm that a high percentage of those who learn English skills interact with modern technology means such as smart boards, computers and display screens compared to traditional teaching methods“ (p. 173). The critical need for modern technology in the English classroom is summed up by Alqathani (2019):

(...) the study revealed that interaction with teachers and the overall response of students in the classroom has improved significantly when using modern techniques in teaching English as the interaction with teachers using modern media reached more than 90%, unlike those who are taught by traditional means have less than 50% interaction with teachers, thus it is clear that studies, surveys have shown that students are more inclined to learn from E-curriculum and English teachers prefer to use modern technology rather than traditional teaching methods due to the students fast response and their interaction and educational attainment with high statistically rates. (pp. 173-174)

Technology in Teaching Speaking

Past Research

As Stockwell (2018) recalls, the impact of technology on language teaching and learning has changed dramatically over the past several decades. Stockwell explains that the focus was initially on drill-type activities aiming at grammar and vocabulary improvement on standalone machines. This has changed rapidly as web-based activities replaced these machines as the Internet became a source of accessing information and a tool for creating activities containing such information.

Fast-forward to the past two decades, Internet-based tools evolved into very sophisticated services, resulting in the use of computers to promote interaction with native speakers or other learners through either text-based, audio, or video-based forms. Stockwell follows that with the sky-rocketing popularity of mobile devices, the research began to focus on how these can be implemented into existing learning systems. In sum, “the advent of the Internet brought with it great possibilities to link learners with classmates, teachers and interlocutors“ (Stockwell, 2018, p. 4044).

TESOL Technology Standards

Healey et al. understand ‘technology’ as “the use of systems that rely on computer chips, digital applications and networks in all of their forms“(Healey, 2008, p. 3). TESOL technology standards carry one key message: while technology and its use in the classroom might be intimidating to many teachers, its appropriate use by trained teachers can significantly benefit language learners. (Healey et al., 2008).

This document’s standards are divided into ‘Technology Standards for Language Learners’ and Technology Standards for Language Teacher’. For this thesis, I will focus primarily on the latter.

Healey et al. (2008) define the purpose of the teacher standards in various categories. They claim that teachers must recognise the need to integrate technology into their teaching and understand the need for a never-ending learning process throughout their teaching careers. They should also view the standards as a challenge to reach a higher level of proficiency in using technology. The purpose of students’ standards for teachers is relatively simple, “to know what is expected of them in terms of knowledge, skills and curriculum implementation“ (Healey et al., 2008, p. 5). In addition, teachers should be able to build on such knowledge and create activities that integrate learners” progress in meeting the standards while also meeting language learning objectives (Healey, 2008, p. 5)

As for the goals and standards in ‘Technology Standards for Teachers, teachers should pursue four main goals. These goals are further explained in performance indicators standards (APPENDIX D). I will not list all the goals and standards but focus on this thesis’s relevant points. The second goal describes that ‘Language teachers integrate pedagogical knowledge and skills with technology to enhance language learning and teaching.’ This is strongly tied to points in this thesis which will be introduced later on. It has a lot to do with the efficiency and effectiveness of using technology in the classroom.

Standard 2 of the second goal presupposes that language teachers integrate technology into their teaching approaches. Again, many language teachers reject using technology because it would corrupt their teaching styles. This is not the aim of Standard 2. It instead highlights that teachers implement technology to their already existing teaching approaches.

Standard 3 of the second goal starts where Standard 2 finishes; learning outcomes and goals. This targets the whole purpose of using technology in the classroom, to make activities in the lesson more effective, more efficient or, ideally, both.

Healey et al. (2008) explain that “the overall objective is to provide guidance, rather than to set barriers or unrealistic expectation (...) it is imperative to provide mechanisms for foundational as well as professional development in a way that is sustainable and support rather than punitive“ (p. 4).

Teaching Approaches

Gajek (2018) proposes two approaches to teaching with online technology; atomistic and holistic. The main focus of the former is teaching the separate sounds, which is the basis for teaching speaking skills to beginners. The approach process is that “learners begin to make the sounds of the target language and to express themselves in communicative acts, often using formulaic expressions“ (Gajek, 2018, p. 1966).

The latter approach, holistic, aims at interactions and spoken narratives. In this approach, the technology can be viewed as a partner or a means of communication. Teaching and learning spoken narrative with technology can be provided using audio or video software, mainly through individual or group oral production recordings. This allows for further analysis or editing. (Gajek, 2018)

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Kessler (2018) describes CALL as a diverse and vibrant area connecting language teaching and instructional technology. Kessler says that CALL is a field that focuses primarily on “innovative technological intervention in a time of unprecedented technological innovation“ (Kessler, 2018, p. 3779).

Kessler (2018) agrees with the two authors cited above. He believes technology has undoubtedly influenced all aspects of language teaching and learning in recent years. He explains that initially, the focus of CALL was placed upon particular tasks and functions.

However, recently, a shift has been recorded. There is now much interest in using social media in a context that resembles authentic language production. The innovations from the CALL field allow teachers and interlocutors to provide their learners with, first, individualised instruction and, more importantly, authentic contexts for language practice. Kessler sees CALL as a dynamic area that guarantees further development and always something new to explore.

While CALL is a vibrant and promising area, it also provides considerable challenges, especially for individual language teachers. As Kessler explains, “language teachers tend to lack awareness of CALL practices, avoid using CALL in their own teaching and perpetuate technophobic patterns that mimic traditional instruction they themselves received“ (Kessler, 2018, p. 3781). In the following paragraphs, it is necessary to dedicate closer attention to CALL’s methodology, its sub-types, and the benefits and negatives it brings.

CALL Methodology

Egbert (2018) uncovers that no specific CALL methods are known from traditional behaviourist methods. Nevertheless, teachers can use technology to support traditional methods, such as audio-lingual or communicative and integrative methods. As implied above, the evolution of technology and devices that can facilitate learning is much faster than teachers’ accommodation to these devices. The accommodation might be too difficult for many teachers because they believe it contradicts their teaching styles. However, it can be quite the opposite, as communication, information use, and collaboration were all part of language teaching before technology was integrated into it. The technology utilises all of these and makes them prevalent in language classrooms. Therefore, there is no need for unique methods within the field of CALL.

Egbert (2018) suggests that the best that can be done for methods is “to provide language learning principles derived from the research and discuss how technology might help support these principles“ (Egbert, 2018, p. 3798). A set of general principles (APPENDIX C) can help teachers create CALL lessons and curricula.

The principles are not the only feature of CALL that should be paid attention to. CALL technology should fulfil a specific purpose that a teacher has in mind. Egbert (2018) proposes that CALL technology be used in teaching and learning to make learning more effective, efficient, or both.

‘More effective’ is defined as “students learn a language better or faster using the technology than they would have using the tools that would ordinarily be available“ (Egbert, 2018, p. 3799). This means that using technology just for the sake of using technology is not meaningful and only slows down the work rate. Egbert (2018) provides an example of such improved effectiveness. He proposes that learners may “learn to write better when discussing academic issues on Facebook than when they write papers for the teacher“ (Egbert, 2018, p. 3799).

‘More effective’ can be understood as achieving goals and expected outcomes with less time and effort. A simple example could be using a word processing program to brainstorm, write, edit and comment. (Egbert, 2018)

CALL in Teaching Speaking

Hegelheimer et al. (2018) highlight that “positive effects of technology in language teaching were found across different levels in each aspect, with one exception in 37 studies“ (Hegelheimer, 2018, p. 3805). In teaching speaking, technology has helped develop various social network sites that provide platforms for oral communication in English. These services aim at pronunciation and overall comprehensibility of speech production. Among these, ‘WeSpeke‘ and ‘Languing‘ can be named. (Hegelheimer et al., 2018)

WeSpeke is a free global network for learning and practising languages and offers preparation for English certifications such as TOEFL, IELTS, or Cambridge English Assessment. WeSpeke can be accessed using a desktop, tablet, or mobile phone. WeSpeke also offers an online lesson that teaches the basics. The chat system WeSpeke is based on the crowdsourcing model. It matches users with different language proficiency and enables them to learn from each other. (*Analysis of Existing Similar Tools*, 2018)

Languing provides a similar experience with one exception; it aims at interaction with native speakers of a language rather than learners of that language.

Hegelheimer et al. (2018) name automatic speech recognition tools (ASR) as another relevant application of technology to teaching speaking. These tools are ‘Windows Speech Recognition,’ ‘Dragon Dictation,’ ‘Speaking Pal’, and others.

Gajek (2018) names other ways of improving speaking skills through technology. She suggests that digital games, primarily ‘massive multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs)’, involve a lot of spoken interaction between players interested in the game.

Usually, a common language is used. This language is often English, but also Russian or Spanish. The ideas of Gajek about MMORPG are supported by (Deutschmann, Panichi & Molka-Danielsen, 2009 as cited in Gajek, 2008), who propose that “language learner’s participation in virtual world gaming, such as MMORPGs increases confidence and motivation“ (p. 1969).

Gajek (2018) says that audiovisual materials (AVM) such as movies or TV shows, which offer a friendly environment for learning speaking skills, are trendy. The benefit of AVMs is authentic exposure to oral interaction, which provides pleasure and motivation for many learners. In this area, Gajek (2018) proposes captioning or subtitling of AVMs as a great way of memorising spoken language in a clear contextual situation. Gajek presents two ways of subtitling, intralanguage and interlanguage. Intralanguage subtitling entails writing the spoken language heard from the screen, while interlanguage subtitling means “writing subtitles translated from the target language to the native language (...) aims to sensitise learners to authentic spoken language“ (Gajek, 2018, p. 1967).

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Gajek (2018) also introduces Mobile assisted language learning (MALL). She suggests that MALL thrives in under-resourced areas. She explains that electronic devices, such as mobile phones and tablets are helpful and appropriate for language learning. She proposes that technology also plays a crucial role in feedback; mentions the possibility of recording learners’ oral performances. A significant advantage of this is the possibility of playing the recording multiple times and allowing learners to notice and identify both holistic and atomistic features of their speech. More in-depth, these recordings can also be further analysed by special software, such as Sound Forge Pro, to make learners aware of their pronunciation and target accent. (Kukulska-Hulme and Shield, 2008, as cited in Gajek, 2018) claim that “collaborative speaking and listening activities could be supported by mobile devices“ (p. 1968).

Pedagogical Implications

It is important to reiterate that technology in the lesson should have a clear purpose and ensure improved efficiency or effectiveness of the activities. Therefore, the massive amount of technological devices around motivates us to use them correctly and with a specific purpose. It seems pointless to use it only because it is trendy to use technology in

the classroom. Gajek (2018) selects several practical implications for teachers who want to use technology to improve learners' speaking skills.

The first piece of advice is to use audiovisual materials routinely. Using subtitles when watching a film inside and outside the classroom can help learners get used to the language and follow the speech patterns. To take it further, learners might select their favourite movie scenes, prepare their learning materials, or re-act the scene themselves. (Gajek, 2018)

Furthermore, Gajek (2018) suggest that learners could try to add captions and revoice homemade audiovisual materials. The language samples could be recorded, and teachers could give corrective feedback on the performance using feedback materials, such as rubrics. Another way of working with recordings can be adding voice to the presentations in MS PowerPoint. This way, learners get immediate feedback from their peers and see how they react to their voice quality. Such activity can be conducted in pairs or small groups. Another pedagogical implication might be using speech-to-text software with learners. Such software automatically converts speech to a written text and the other way around. In this case, learners get immediate feedback and can correct themselves based on it.

One of the most significant pieces of advice regarding using technology to promote learners' speaking skills is introducing speaking games and encouraging learners to participate in them freely. Learners can also be encouraged to explore applications and virtual environments outside the lesson. (Gajek, 2018)

In the area of authentic materials, which cover everything from social media posts and articles to regular newspaper articles, Bordonaro (2018) suggests that tasks using these materials should be used in speaking class "to promote successful communication through sharing of information in (...) in both formal and informal speaking activities" (p. 1977).

As specific applications and services that can help promote learners' speaking skills, multiple sources list recommend using various applications. For example, Adobe Spark Video App is an excellent tool for creating animated videos with voiceover. Next up, Audioboom is an app that provides high-quality speech recording and further analyses. Lastly, Voice Record Pro is a tool that allows learners to record their speech of unlimited length. Outside of the area of simply recording one's voice, Garage Band and Book Creator stand out. The former is a phenomenal game that allows the players to create and record

stories and songs. The latter's title explains its purpose perfectly; Book Creator will enable learners to develop their own books featuring audio, photos, video, and text.

Summary of the Theoretical Background

The theoretical part focused primarily on the connection between the teaching of speaking skills and technology. As described above, technology and teaching speaking are closely related. Technology breathes fresh air into a little obsolete teaching system and provides teachers and learners with opportunities to practice that were not possible a few decades ago. As proposed by various writers, integrating technology in teaching opens up new, unexplored territories of language learning and practice. Especially Gajek proposes that teaching with technology, if done right, enhances the quality of the learning and facilitates the needs of learners in the 21st century better than just regular textbooks. However, it is necessary to point out the requirements for using technology in teaching, especially the need for efficiency and effectiveness. With technology's steady impact in recent years, some principles need to be followed, as Egbert suggests, not to use technology wastefully. In theory, technology provides an exciting element to a rather stale teaching system but especially in language learning and specifically in improving speaking skills, users have to be aware that not all tools are suitable and useful.

III. METHODS

This chapter discusses the practical part of this thesis. In detail, I describe the research material, procedure, and criteria for assessing online tools and platforms to promote speaking skills. The main focus of the research was to assess online tools and platforms and find some suitable ones for lower-secondary learners from six to nine graders. As logic suggests, many of these tools and platforms will be dedicated to self-study instead the whole class environment. I sought applications and online platforms that could promote accuracy rather than fluency of a speech. This decision impacted the selection. Specifically, I decided to study what impact the applications and platforms have on developing the speaking accuracy of a selected group. In my vision, speaking accuracy covers word choice based on context, correct pronunciation and the ability to create a grammatically correct sentence using the chosen words. For this purpose, I constructed two primary research questions:

- Which of the applications and platforms available can promote speaking accuracy?
- Which of these applications can be used in a regular school environment?

Research Material

I selected the five most promising platforms and applications recommended online by teachers and language tutors for research. The list of tools is as follows: ELSA Speak, Google Translate, Sound Forge Pro, HelloTalk iTranslateConverse. These applications were mentioned in multiple articles to improve accuracy and pronunciation. Out of these, three applications (ELSA Speak, iTranslate Converse and Hello Talk) are specifically dedicated to improving speaking accuracy. On the other hand, Sound Forge Pro is mainly a recording service that analyses a speech using unique software. Possibly the best-known tool on this list is Google Translator. It is not an exaggeration to say that Google did much quality work with its Translator and is much more accurate in its responses than ever before.

Research Procedure

After selecting materials for the research, I compiled my test group. I have been an online tutor for about three and a half years, and my specification is one-on-one lessons. Each lesson takes precisely one hour. Therefore I have much time for thorough practice with the learners. Some learners are my long-time clients, while some are relatively new. They are all primary school learners and avid English language learners. All participants voluntarily participated in the research and were familiar with its purpose. To maintain anonymity, I refer to the test subjects by the initial letter of their first name.

The list of the test group is as follows:

- A - 12 years old, 6th grade, low-intermediate level (language proficiency according to CEFR scale – A2)
- T – 14 years old, 8th Grade, intermediate level (language proficiency according to CEFR scale B1)
- M – 12 years old, 6th grade, elementary level (language proficiency according to CEFR scale A1)
- V – 13 years old, 7th grade, intermediate level (language proficiency according to CEFR scale – B1)
- R – 15 years old, 9th grade, upper-intermediate level language proficiency according to CEFR scale – B2)

In the research, I tested each tool with the test subjects. For each online tool, 3 hours of testing by the test subjects were dedicated. Therefore, learners spent 180 minutes testing each tool. I have chosen this time limit to achieve objectivity and avoid making false statements about each tool without adequately testing it. I consider the time limit fair and sufficient to achieve quality research results.

Testing each tool required a different approach but the same goal: assessing whether the tool promotes speaking accuracy. I tested learners speaking accuracy before I commenced the research. I took and inspired Preliminary English Test (PET) and Cambridge English First (FCE) Speaking part worksheets for the initial and post-research testing. An example of such a worksheet can be accessed in (APPENDIX E). I asked each participant five basic questions about them and monitored their performance. Then I gave each photograph and asked them to speak about it for about a minute. The last step was to

have a continuous conversation about a topic for about 1,5 – 2 minutes. Through this testing, I acquired a general understanding of the participants' speaking skills, accuracy, pronunciation and fluency. Based on the observation, I scored the participant's performances with the help of scoring sheets used in official PET and FCE Speaking Exams. As speaking is one of the most challenging skills to assess, the scoring was subjective, but I tried my best to rate each category responsibly (APPENDIX G). During the research, learners were closely observed while testing the tool, and immediate reflection was conducted after each session. Learners gave honest feedback on the use of the tool and reflected on their overall impression of it. After the three sessions, I revised the responses and impressions and came to an overall conclusion. However, before doing so, I tested learners' accuracy one more time, as explained above and ended the research.

After testing each tool, learners were asked to fill in a reflective questionnaire regarding the quality of each application (APPENDIX F). The questionnaire was designed to ask participants to agree or disagree with various statements. Therefore, after the research, I had two kinds of evaluation, my own, inspired by the PET and FCE Speaking exam, and assessment from the learners through reflective questionnaires.

IV. RESULTS AND COMMENTARIES

This chapter aims to present a detailed description of the research results. The chapter is structured according to individual activities and includes the observations' results and the questionnaires' responses. The results are accompanied by commentaries, which further interpret the gathered information.

ELSA Speak

The first tool that all participants tested was ELSA Speak. The description in the application itself promises to be 'best-in-class AI for English pronunciation and fluency.' The stats in the application suggest that 95% of its users expressed higher confidence in speaking English, while 90% reported improving their pronunciation and 68% of those who tried the application reported they spoke and communicated more clearly. It is unclear where the percentages come from and what they are based on. All participants were asked to enter their native language, so the feedback from the application provided more accurate feedback. All test subjects also learn English for education, so the tasks' content was differentiated. The application also adjusted the learning sessions based on the level of language proficiency of the learners, which I consider vital for scaffolding the learning process. The application is available for desktops, iOS and Android supported devices.

The application allows for three types of practice, casual (which lasts for 10 minutes a day), medium practice (15 minutes/day) and serious practice (20 minutes/day). I chose two sessions of twenty minutes of practice separated by a 10-minute break to boost efficiency. The last ten minutes of the lesson were dedicated to feedback and reflection.

With the help of ELSA Speak, the aim was to practice the correct pronunciation of problematic words intensively and choose the right word for a given context.

Participant 'A' reported having issues with the pronunciation of types of food and constructing sentences using those words. We created a study set in the application, which consisted of 30 types of food and another set which consisted of 20 sentences which included words that referred to types of food such as beef, pork, cake, grapes and others. After the first session of two in the first lesson, participant 'A' said the following 'I cannot believe that it is so easy to learn something that I thought to be so difficult.' It is important to note that participant A used German more than English as his father comes from Germany. I noticed that he had issues with putting word stress on the correct syllables and had issues with pronouncing plural forms. This disappeared very quickly. Due to the user-

friendly interface, the participants reported “learning without realising I was learning. It is like a game and gives me bonus points for correct pronunciation.” As the progress was faster than expected, I decided that switch study set to more complex constructions, such as compound sentences but using the same vocabulary. Again, participant ‘A’ saw considerable progress, and in his own words “, it propelled me to progress even faster. I sometimes have issues motivating myself to study things I do not understand, but building my language skills like a pyramid from the simple words to complex sentences is very rewarding. “

Overall, after completing six sessions with ELSA Speak, Participant ‘A’ decided to use the application in his free time and would recommend it as very useful for improving speaking accuracy and fluency and even boosting one’s confidence in speaking.

Similar results were reached by participant ‘M’, who is the same age and attends the same grade as the former participants. Initially, he thought that working with the application might be boring and useless, so in the first session, I showed him around and made him familiar with its content. He confessed that he has a big problem pronouncing ‘th’ sounds in both voice and voiceless variation, ð as in ‘this’ and θ in words such as ‘teeth’. To make it easier for him, I discovered a pre-built set which contained words with this grammar. He practised with the application for two more sessions and reported having more confidence when speaking using the abovementioned grammar items. He declared that he tried multiple other services and platforms throughout the process, mainly Duolingo, ELSA Speak is more user-friendly than Duolingo, and community-generated content is straightforward.

One of my long-term learners, Participant ‘R’, possesses language proficiency classified as B2 level according to the CEFR scale. She still attends lower-secondary school and said, “being ahead of everyone for such a long time simply becomes boring after some time.” She reported sometimes mispronouncing easy words under pressure in real-world interactions. Therefore, ELSA Speak was a great stepping stone for her to more advanced areas of language learning. She freely practised with ELSA Speak for the allocated time and focused on fast-connected speech accuracy. After completing the testing, she reported to “improve slightly, but the area is so complex that more throughout practice is needed actually to see the results in speaking“. She decided to suggest the idea of using ELSA Speak to her teacher and classmates.

A few weeks after the research ended, Participant 'R' notified me that her parents decided to purchase a license to use ELSA Speak. She declared to still struggle with the pronunciation of certain words, so we decided to use this tool even in our private lessons

Participants 'V' and 'T' experienced progress similar to Participant 'M'. They both lacked confidence in pronouncing certain words and placing a word stress and a correct syllable. Additionally, Participant 'V' appreciated the distinction between British and American variants of certain words as she thought they were pronounced differently at first. As explained above, what worked for Participant 'M' benefited these two learners.

As visible in the reflective questionnaires, all participants considered ELSA Speak one of the best applications for improving language accuracy, pronunciation, and fluency; as implied in the theoretical parts of the thesis, accuracy and fluency are practised exclusively, and ELSA Speak offers quality solutions for both options. What is precious about ELSA Speaking, according to the learners' answers, is the fact that it makes them more confident in their speaking skills which is something many learners struggle with. Especially Participant 'V' expressed that her confidence has increased considerably using ELSA Speaking. She highlighted the improvement in pronunciation as the most significant reason for the confidence boost. Additionally, the user interface of the applications is highly appreciated by the learners.

However, there is an obstacle that ELSA Speak posts cannot be overlooked. Because it offers a wide range of features, sets and community, it requires a monthly or yearly subscription to have full access. When paid monthly, the subscription costs 166 CZK. There was a time-limited option for 639 CZK per year at the research time, but it might no longer be available when reading this thesis. Nevertheless, for those who try ELSA Speak and like it, the subscription offers a complete learning plan and regular speaking lessons

Google Translate

The Translate platform developed by Google is a service that hardly anyone could imagine a few years ago to correct pronunciation, slang differences, and language accuracy. It used to do inaccurate translations and struggled considerably with text-specific features of the texts, such as metonymy, metaphor, idioms and others. However, it made a great leap forward in the last few years, and past inconsistencies are forgotten. Nowadays, Google Translator offers high-quality translations of words, phrases and even extended,

compound sentences. The translation of individual words also offers explanations and synonyms that can replace them. The interface is user-friendly and straightforward yet amazingly reliable and efficient. Google Translate is available for almost all devices with an internet connection, but only the dedicated application for iOS and Android devices contains all the features available.

All participants had similar conditions, which varied according to their language proficiency. Their tasks had various difficulties, from the easiest to the most challenging. The tasks were following:

1. Choose ten words from the vocabulary list in your textbook a record yourself saying them on Google Translate. If the service does not recognise the word, try repeating it until you meet the desired result.
2. Record yourself saying ten sentences in English. As in the first exercise, if the service translates the sentence correctly, move on to the next. If not, repeat until you succeed.

With the help of Google Translate, all participants focused mainly on word choice and pronunciation as the systems gave them immediate feedback on their pronunciation and the meaning of the word, word class and possible synonyms and antonyms. There was also some practice focusing on speaking fluency but not so much compared to other tools, such as Hello Talk.

Participants 'A' and 'M' had a little room for manoeuvring, as more complex grammar, such as present tense simple, present tense continuous and others, usually appear one grade higher than they currently are. Therefore, they mostly worked with individual words and practised differences between synonyms and antonyms. At the end of testing, they reported being more confident when choosing an appropriate word for specific sentences, such as 'handsome' with connection to 'man' and pretty with connection to 'woman'. It became clear to them that there is a significant difference between a formal and informal greeting and that 'Hello Mr Dean' in a formal conversation is inappropriate, whereas 'Hello John' when talking to a friend is more than acceptable. They both wished to learn the correct version of an apology in English, mainly for situations in school when they forget a homework, book or come to the class late. Using Google Translate fulfilled this wish and helped them pronounce the sentence correctly and notice the correct order of

the English sentence. They valued understanding the correct word order of many common phrases as a main takeaway from the testing. Whenever they need appropriate words for any situation, they can consult Google Translator on the computer or even on their phone or tablet. They both appreciated taking photos of any text and realising whether the words they wrote were appropriate and accurate in one click. Additionally, both reported that the option to playback any recording instantly helped them internalise the correct pronunciation more accurately.

Participants ‘T’ and ‘V’ told me before testing Google Translate that they use it daily when unsure about the word’s meaning or pronunciation. After the testing, both reported discovering options of Google Translate that they did not know before, for example, the option to take a photo of a text and immediately recognise its accuracy and cohesion. They were especially thrilled about the possibility of getting much information about a word by just typing into Google Translator. Not only do we get the translator to the desired language, but we can also hear its correct pronunciation and definition in different word classes and the frequency of the given translation—for example, the word ‘high’. For high, the most frequent translation is ‘vysoký’, but the translation also offers less frequent translations, such as ‘velký, silný or vznešený’. Each word's definition in each word class is also accompanied by a sentence using that word.

As the testing results with participants ‘A’ and ‘M’ were more than promising to provide sufficient evidence that Google Translate is a valuable tool for improving accuracy in the way I presented in this chapter, I tried to increase the difficulty level for participant ‘R’. The process was following. I wrote a sentence into Google Translate in Czech, and the service said it aloud in the target language – English. The participant’s task was to write what he heard and translate the sentence into Czech. We then compared the source sentence with the resulting sentence. This multi-step task occurred multiple times.

All the participants reported a considerable improvement in speaking accuracy as they got immediate feedback on their speaking output. Participant ‘R’ described the work with Google Translate accordingly “It is like my personal study buddy. I can talk to any whenever I am unsure about the meaning, pronunciation or spelling of any word. Additionally, by recording my voice, I get instant feedback, and I know whether I made myself understood or if I should choose different words, word order or pronunciation to improve myself. I usually used other translation services like Google Translate was not

always of high quality and sometimes gave incorrect translations and struggled with the translation of long sentences and figures of speech, such as metaphors or idioms, but now I think I will use Google Translate exclusively.“

Participants ‘A’ and ‘M’ did not know Google Translate from their learning of English, so they were both shocked about the possibilities it offers. It might have been the first time that I got a chance to realise if someone understands them and whether they are using the right words for the desired message or not.

Post research, all participants messaged me privately that they had installed Google Translate on their phone and will use it to develop their English proficiency.

Sound Forge Pro

I already mentioned Sound Forge Pro in the theoretical part of this thesis to record the learner’s voice and analyse it using unique software to make learners more aware of their pronunciation and target accent. For the research, I purchased a Sound Forge Pro 13 key, enabling me to use the service, the first red flag of this application. The entry key cost me about 800 CZK, which is a lot more than a regular language learner would want to pay. Nevertheless, I tested the application with all 5 participants. It needs to be said that I am not a technological expert, and neither are my learners. Therefore, the platform seems less organised than other recording applications available.

The testing with all the participants was based on the same formula. While recorded by Sound Forge Pro, learners were asked to read a few sentences aloud. Then the recording was played back to them. The key of the exercise was a correct pronunciation with a side task to practice different accents to accommodate for the variety of accents even inside the United Kingdom, and learners were provided with a recording from Google Translate of the same sentence. A big plus of Sound Forge Pro is the quality of the recording. I am not an audiophile, but the recordings were more transparent than a regular recording platform.

Nevertheless, we found no advantage other than the recording quality throughout no testing with five learners. The entry key is quite expensive and loses its potential if the service is not used for music recording and mastering purposes. Yes, all the learners were satisfied with hearing their voices crystal clear, but that was the only advantage. The application should primarily be used for music-making rather than for learning English.

I was excited to test the unique software that the application uses for analysing the voice. I was shocked that I would have to pay a subscription fee of 250 CZK/month to use

it fully. I decided against it as it became apparent that even if the software were something special, it would not change my honest opinion on it from an educational perspective. Sound Forge Pro is merely an over-priced recording application without the unique software. I would not recommend it for personal use, but it has much value for musicians.

Reflective questionnaires confirmed my assumptions concerning the usefulness of Sound Forge Pro in learning. As the only tool, Sound Forge Pro was rated negatively in all categories by all learners. No further analysis of the data is necessary for this area.

I suggest that Sound Forge Pro is one of the examples of digital tools that are pretty high in digital tool rankings focusing on promoting speaking skills and fails to deliver ultimately. This is ultimately one of the problems that the modern era faces; articles fantasizing about the quality of any application are one thing, but they can also be misleading, and sometimes they are paid for by the inventor of the application to get more downloads and get more money. That is also one of the reasons why proper testing is mandatory before choosing any tool.

HelloTalk

Another application that I put to the test was Hello Talk. The application's main screen promises that its users can practice up to 150 languages with 30 million speakers globally. Each participant set up their profile first. The application asked them for their native country and native language + English proficiency. The application is available on iOS and Android-supported devices. The desktop version is also available, but the features are somewhat constrained due to being designed primarily for mobile phones and tablets. It contains a 'connect' tab where learners worldwide introduce themselves and state what language they are speaking, what language they would like to learn and their language proficiency. This way, learners with similar interests can connect and improve together.

At first, the learners were hesitant, but I assured them that talking to other learners would help them more than any textbook, and they all agreed to test the application. We agreed they would be given three lessons to test the application, and I would only act as an observer to not skew the results. The main point of the exercise was both fluency and accuracy for multiple reasons.

First, the practice was more-less free because I acted only as an observer, and learners fielded the conversations and audio or audiovisual calls by themselves; therefore, fluency was a significant factor as the exchange of information was almost instantaneous.

Nevertheless, we also focused on speaking accuracy as no sensible conversation can take place without an appropriate word choice and pronunciation plus good use of grammar.

Participant 'A' was eager to talk with others and showed natural enthusiasm for improving his speaking skills. He said having problems with fast speech and more complex grammar is tricky. For the duration of the research, he had about 15 conversations with people of higher proficiency but also with lower proficiency. Sometimes the conversation took place using only audio, and in a few cases, he managed to have a conversation with audio and video together. Understandably, the shyness limited him slightly in the first lesson, and sometimes he stumbled over a few words and had to ask the partner for clarification or repeat the sentence, but he got comfortable quite soon.

After the first session, Participant 'A' said, "I thought my English was very bad, but I am gladly surprised that people understand me and we can improve simultaneously. I am looking forward to the next session. I think my main problem in speaking is my confidence. However, now I know that the goal is not to get the flawless pronunciation or achieve superior fluency but get the message across to the speaking partner and the ability to react accordingly." The subsequent lessons went similarly, and even when the internet connection between the learners was sometimes poor, they switched to messaging each other and correcting each mistake. The chat option offers features; learners can directly translate the message to their native language or correct mistakes and explain why it is a mistake. They can also use AI grammar, which offers them thorough explanations for better understanding. They can also play the message aloud, record their messages, and send them to their 'pen-friends'.

In the post-research reflection, participant 'A' summed up his thoughts: "I am very thankful to test this application and use it in my free time. I feel confident when speaking, and my speaking accuracy has improved significantly. I know my proficiency is relatively low right now, but I am sure that if I keep using at least some of the applications I showed, I will improve a lot faster." His confidence in speaking skills increased as his speaking competence did. The accuracy of participant 'A' speaking surprised me a lot. He uses HelloTalk quite frequently, and we regularly chat about his progress.

Participants 'T' and 'M' were hesitant about testing Hello Talk. They both reported having difficulties talking to strangers. To accommodate this, I decided to pair them to test whether they could learn from each other and improve their speaking skills. I did this

because I was aware of their similar language proficiency. At first, they were surprised when they realised they would be talking to a Czech native speaker of the same age in English. They freely chatted in the first lesson about general topics and even decided to do English homework while on the video call. They both spoke strictly English and tried to correct each other's mistakes.

After three sessions, I arranged a video call with both of them and asked them for reflection and impressions of the application. In this regard, participant 'T' said, "I appreciate the chance to talk to someone who also likes English and is prepared to correct my mistake without laughing at me or making me feel embarrassed." Participant 'M' said to him similar thoughts, adding that "the only negative thing about the application is that it only offers a 7-day trial of the premium features, and then you have to pay a monthly subscription of 125 CZK to stay connected. Nevertheless, it is the best place to super-boost their learning for anyone who loves English."

Participant 'V' was next to test HelloTalk. She is generally very talkative and surprisingly fluent in English, so having a chance to talk to someone was exciting. I left the testing entirely to herself and only observed her moves in HelloTalk, message conversations with strangers and subsequent audio conversations. Soon, it became apparent from the start that HelloTalk would become her go-to place for conversation with other learners. She did not mind that she did not know her partners in the interaction and used it as an opportunity to practice her speaking skills freely and without any fear. As her accuracy was respectable before the testing of HelloTalk, the improvement was not as visible as with less advanced participants.

Nevertheless, participant 'V' said that "the main advantage of the application is anonymity and opportunity to chat with anyone from around the world and being able to compare my language skills in them and help them with pronunciation or word choice and the other way around. I talked to one of my classmates recently, and we agreed that confidence is the biggest issue with speaking a foreign language. You can have brilliant knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, but if you are not confident enough to speak with other people, you will never improve."

Participant 'R' could not participate in testing of HelloTalk due to COVID-19 illness but message me that he had tried it a few times and fancied its features. However, he stopped using it because of the subscription as he paid monthly fees for other services

and wanted to decrease his expenses. He would recommend HelloTalk to anyone who wants to practice English speaking and writing skills without fear of being judged.

In sum, the reflective questionnaires and immediate discussions after each session suggest that all participants viewed HelloTalk as an excellent tool for interaction with other language learners, and the majority of them can see themselves using the tool in their free time to improve their speaking skills further.

iTranslate Converse

The last tool that was incorporated into my research was iTranslate Converse. Formerly titled simply Converse, this tool is reported to “turn your iPhone and Apple Watch into a two-way translation device. The simple design enables natural conversations in 38 languages and automatically detects the correct language between two selected languages for a fast and accurate translation“ (*iTranslate Converse*, n.d.). The application is available on iOS-supported devices, and also desktop version is available, though entirely restricted in its functions.

I mainly included this tool in the research to compare it with the more popular Google Translate. Before testing it with the participants, I browsed the tool and realised that the interface is almost identical to Google Translate with few features missing, including the ability to take a photo of a text and instantly translate it, the ability to speak to the application and see/hear a real-time translation of the word spoken. I also discovered that the application works exclusively after subscribing to it monthly or yearly; luckily, it offers a 7-day trial period. The monthly subscription costs 130 CZK/month, while the yearly subscription amounts to 999 CZK. The user can choose the source language as a target language; in this case, all participants were asked to speak in English to let the application translate it to Czech. The aim was to focus on all determinants presented above: word choice, pronunciation and grammar. The reason is straightforward; to get the desired results, we must use the right components appropriately.

I discovered with all participants that the tool sometimes overlooked grammatical errors and translated the message correctly. One example might be an incorrect sentence ,I go at holiday in Egypt‘ which the application translates to “Pojedu na dovolenou do Egypta – I will go on a holiday to Egypt“. Therefore, the application used appropriate grammatical rules on an incorrect sentence to improve understanding. That would be admirable if the primary goal of the testing were to test the translation ability of iTranslate and not to which

extent it can promote speaking accuracy. Because the latter was the goal of the testing, it became apparent that iTranslate cannot promote speaking accuracy but can translate a word or sentence of a text even when they contain linguistic errors. Therefore, I would not recommend using iTranslate Converse to improve language accuracy or fluency, but I would happily recommend it for real-time translations.

I presume the biggest letdown about iTranslate Converse is its connection with Apple. Generally, Apple is seen as one of the leading companies in the area of technology and development. Therefore, it is strange that an application promoted with the prolific prefix 'i', which usually precedes products invented by Apple, is not useful for learning purposes despite being advertised as such.

Nevertheless, despite all the negatives that I highlighted above, iTranslate Converse excels in situations when a direct translation is needed. Its ability to listen to two languages simultaneously and translate to each in a millisecond is astonishing and should be worth trying and comparing to other translation services, such as Google Translate.

Moreover, the need to purchase the application might not directly mean it should not be used. If the funds from the purchases are used for further development and improvements of the application and its features, then no objections can be made. Nevertheless, to reiterate, since the research goal was not the features mentioned above, it cannot be recommended for learning purposes.

Key Findings of the Research

Due to the nature of the research, it is impossible to tell which tool had the most impact as the initial testing took place before the start and the second after the end. Therefore, I consulted reflective questionnaires to determine what the participants thought of each application. Based on the speaking accuracy tests similar to PET and FCE Speaking Exams, though in limited form, I found the speaking accuracy of all five participants to be higher than initially.

There might be objections to scoring learners' speaking skills based on subjective opinion, but even without such testing, I was well aware of learning speaking skills and their accuracy based on past half-year lessons. In multiple cases, the change would be noticeable even by an untrained speaker. I noticed the most significant improvement in the area of pronunciation. I was informed by all participants that pronunciation is hardly ever focused on during English lessons.

Out of the applications tested in the research, ELSA Speak and Google Translate performed the best, and they were ranked the highest by all the participants, while Sound Forge Pro was ranked the worst (APPENDIX F). Three out of five applications tested (ELSA Speak, HelloTalk, Google Translate) were approved by the subjective opinions of research participants as valuable tools for promoting speaking skills and, specifically, speaking accuracy as one of the research questions proposed. Moreover, three out of five participants displayed interest in using some of the applications in their free time. Sound Forge Pro and iTranslate Converse were declared by all participants as non-benefiting while

Consequently, to address the second research question, it is apparent that Sound Forge Pro cannot be recommended for study purposes, while Google Translate can be directly incorporated into the classroom without disrupting the existing system. Other researched applications, such as Hello Talk and ELSA speak, are suitable for lower-secondary learners, but they are more likely to be helpful outside the classroom, as explained earlier in this charter. iTranslate Converse is not suitable for learners of English as it overlooks the grammar mistakes in a speech and therefore hinders the process of practising speaking accuracy.

Because I had the luxury of testing each application with only one participant at a time for an extended time, I managed to find out their advantages and disadvantages and consider whether I would use them in my teaching. Not all applications recommended in various articles might not be helpful inside the classroom. However, teachers usually do not have such luxury as they must fulfil various requirements and curricular documents. Therefore, using untested tools with a significant class of twenty learners might be challenging. Additionally, it is always important to consider the price of each tool. As none of the tools tested offers a group discount, the price might be too high even to consider trying out such tools.

Going above the research, which is something that qualified neurologists could explain better, the question of using too much technology arises. I am in no position to judge how much usage of technology is too much for underage children, but an article by Kelli Catana reports that a “study on brain development comparing green time from participants from 2016 to 2020 found a link between higher screen times being associated with poorer mental health and more stress“ (Catana, 2022). In sum, while teaching children

how to use digital technology is essential, it is also important to remember to not overburden them with technology. For example, if four teachers in one day decide to incorporate tablets or mobile phones in a lesson for even 20 minutes, it can already be quite tiresome for some learners and decrease their ability to focus during lessons.

In one of the reflective discussions with research participants, they declared their vision worsened due to having too much screen time. Therefore, while digital tools can provide excellent tools for supporting learning any language skill, they can seriously threaten children's mental health if consumed extensively, and users must be aware of such threats.

V. IMPLICATIONS

This chapter describes the research findings' implications for English teachers and learners. Moreover, I discuss the research's limitations, possible improvements, and suggestions for further research.

Pedagogical Implications

As the research results suggest, many technological tools, such as platforms or apps, provide a good foundation for speaking practice. Out of those included in the research, Hello Talk and ELSA Speak have a friendly interface and allow users to be a part of a community which strives towards the same goal. However, some tools might seem promising but do not improve the learning quality. One common principle that I would recommend teachers to follow before choosing a tool for language teaching is to consider whether such a tool improves the effectiveness or efficiency of the teaching and learning or both. If it does, and it makes the learning toward reaching learning outcomes and improving language skills smoother, then the tool should be used. If none of the requirements implied above is fulfilled, the tool is used wastefully and should not be used in the classroom. One such example from the research is Sound Forge Pro. A tool proposed by various researchers as one of the best recording services available with an option to analyse a speech via unique software. However, through testing, I realised that purchasing such an application is not very cheap, and the unique software needs to be paid separately in monthly payments. If not, then the tool is just an expensive recording service.

Additionally, there are multiple aspects to consider when choosing an application. Firstly, it is necessary to outline why such a tool is more valuable than already used tools in the classroom. Secondly, various tools focus on individual language skills, while some are thought to promote language skills in the complex. There is also a question of price. Many applications offer a 7-day free trial to test their features; then, the user must buy the application as a whole or pay a monthly subscription fee to continue using it.

I do not want to estimate the average budget of a regular school dedicated to improving study tools, but it seems that the price is too hefty for the school to afford in large amounts. Moreover, there is not usually a possibility of a discount on group purchases, so if a teacher wants to purchase the application on 25 tables and the subscription fee amount to 150 CZK, then the institution would have to pay about 3750 CZK every month. As it stands, rather than purchasing the tools, a teacher can introduce

them in the classroom. If we refer to modern English language teachers as more of a guide than someone who possesses the ultimate truth and wants to spread it, then introducing such tools can improve digital competence. With their parents' consent, learners can decide to either use it or not.

In the area of free-to-use applications, Google Translate is the most versatile and highly rated. As explained in the Results and Commentaries, Google Translate is available in the desktop version, same as iOS-supported and Android-supported devices. Therefore, there is no discrimination about who can use the application, as with iTranslate Converse, for example.

As the last recommendation for teachers, I would suggest against creating a broad portfolio of tools and trying to change the existing system. I would instead advise teachers to choose the three well-tested tools and make them optional for use in teaching languages. After all, nothing is the same in education, and what works for one class might not work for another. Therefore, the time when technology replaces long-used tools is not here. Either way, I would recommend that teachers get more information about the area of possible tools a try out what works best for their teaching style, particular class and environment.

Limitations of the Research

There were multiple limitations to the research; some might be unforeseen, and some were apparent even before I commenced the research. First, the limitation that barred me from expanding the research to testing about ten tools with a few more learners was the COVID-19 pandemic. I initially wanted to do the research during my teaching practice in February-March, but the situation did not allow for such a decision as the many classes were held in an online setting and my space for trying out new things was minimal. Also, I contracted the illness in February and have been battling the signs of exhaustion ever since. I genuinely was not in such a physical condition to expand the research in any way.

Second, the broadness of the area of tools that can be used in language teaching and learning was so great that I had to test about thirty of them in private, exclude those obviously useless or poorly designed, and narrow the number to five most promising. Nevertheless, there are other tools that I did not manage to cover more than the five presented. The area is so complex and constantly evolving that it is difficult to predict if those included in the research will be relevant in a few years. On the other hand, other

applications and platforms will likely spring to life. Therefore, teachers must be aware of the available options and educate themselves in this area.

Third, initial and post-research testing results were somewhat subjective as the research was mainly based on observing learners' work to avoid skewing the testing results. Therefore, the results strongly depend on the researcher and evaluator because there are multiple points of view on any situation.

The second source of results originated from the reflective questionnaire from the participants. Again, because I chose the areas in the questionnaire as a researcher, the results would differ if another research constructed it. Moreover, it is uncertain to what extent the learners' answers in the questionnaire were honest. There is a possibility that some of the learners chose random answers in the questionnaires. In the discussions, some of the learners participated more than others and perhaps they agreed with what was being said, only to avoid active participation or further discussion.

Suggestions for Further Research

As for the suggestions for further research, I would recommend that the research is conducted by more than one researcher and in more than one location. More responses from learners must be gathered, and more tools must be tested to ensure the research's greater relevance. Also, some of the limitations mentioned in the section above can be addressed through further research. As I conducted the research in a specific way and could not focus on whole classes, further research can focus directly on testing and observing the impact of the tools in regular lessons. Moreover, I included only one representative for each grade of lower-secondary school in the research. While these might be typical representatives of their respective age groups, they also might not be, and what worked for my research participants might not work for learners in Moravia, Silesia, or other countries. Therefore, further research should include more participants from different levels and locations to thoroughly test the potential of available tools. I propose that research in this area could be conducted every year with vastly different results as the area of digital tools is very vibrant but quite unstable and rapidly changing.

If any researcher decide to do the same research again, I would recommend expanding the pool of participants to include even primary school. I discovered multiple applications throughout my private testing that could not be recommended for a lower-secondary school

language lesson, and therefore I did not include them in my research, but they might be might find great use in a primary school language lesson.

Alternatively, further research could study the incorporation of digital tools into the teaching of speaking skills in contrast to general recommendations to reduce screen time of primary and lower-secondary school learners.

This chapter discussed practical recommendations and implications of the research, its limitations that restricted me from making the research more extensive and suggestions for further research. I suggested that there are multiple questions that schools and teachers have to answer before creating a set of useful tools and how to process should unfold. I also presented some obstacles accompanying the research results and discussed their implications. These limitations are further analysed in subsequent paragraphs concerning suggestions for further research that could be conducted on a bigger scale at the hands of multiple researchers in various areas in contrast to just one researcher in one area. The next chapter discusses the main points of the entire thesis and the importance of the thesis from a broad perspective.

VI. CONCLUSION

This thesis focused on defining how technology can promote speaking skills. The aim was to explore ways online applications and platforms can improve language learners' speaking skills. The theoretical part focused on significant speaking areas, assessment, and teaching methods. I decided to focus closely on speaking accuracy and explore tools to promote it.

To assess my research questions, I assembled a group of participants who tested five applications that I decided would be the most promising based on the available articles and studies. Their speaking accuracy was tested by using a simplified version of PET and FCE Speaking exam worksheets before the research and after it to assess whether their speaking accuracy improved during the research. Learners were closely observed, and after each session, they reflected on the experience, and after testing each tool, they gave honest feedback about the quality of the application in the form of a questionnaire. The results showed that the chosen applications helped learners improve their speaking accuracy, especially in pronunciation. The learners reported feeling engaged by the applications, especially ELSA Speak, and many declared to start using Google Translate frequently and trying Hello Talk multiple times even after the research ended. Other applications, such as Sound Forge Pro or iTranslate Converse, were hardly useful for promoting speaking accuracy.

While the credibility of the research was affected by the low number of participants and tools included, it showed promising results for the tools in the research, which are undoubtedly valuable for my future practice and allow for further research in this area, entailing more participants and more tools. In the era of the online world being very important for young learners, teachers must explore the area of online tools to support their teaching methods and allow for more interactive teaching of speaking skills while being aware of possible negatives of using digital technology not only in language lessons.

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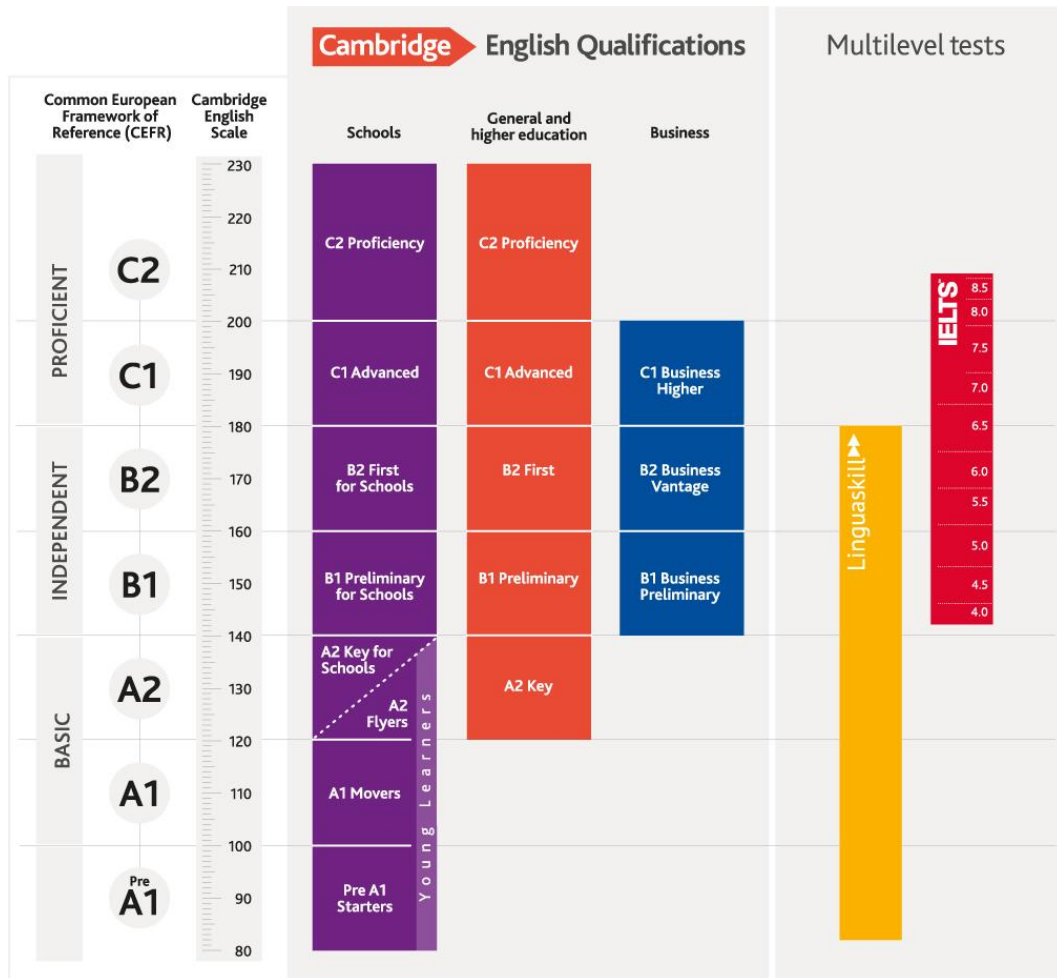
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Common European Framework of Reference

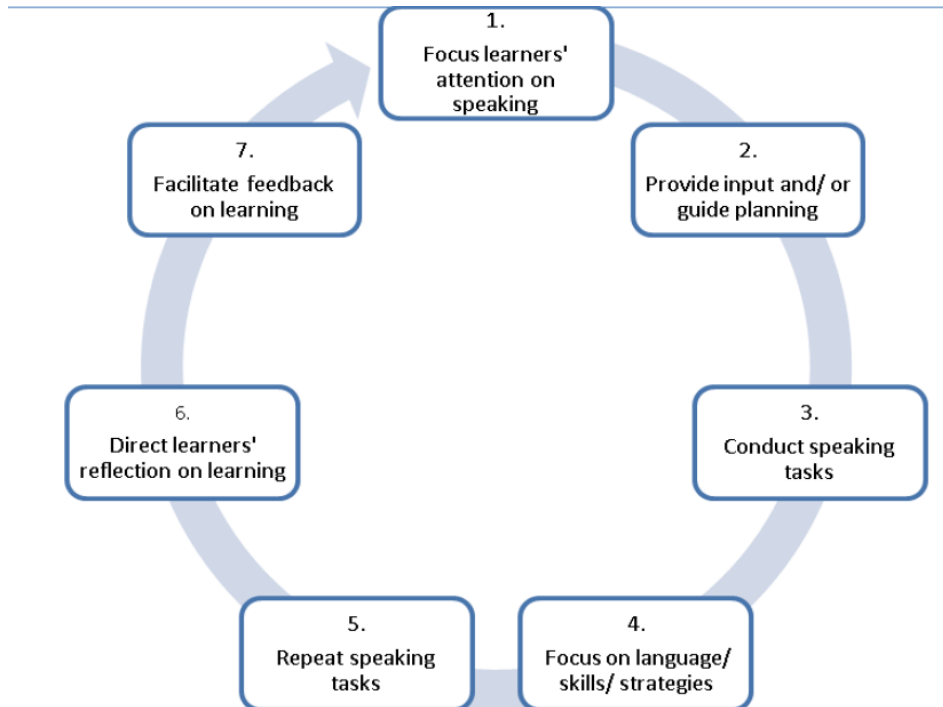


(Common European Framework of Reference. (n.d.). [Diagram]. Cambridge

English. https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/CEFR-Design_28.07.20.jpg)

APPENDIX B

Teaching Speaking Cycle



(Burns, 2016, p. 6)

APPENDIX C

Language learning principles to support technology use

Students have:

1. a focus on their specific needs, abilities, and interests;
2. clear understanding of their goals for language study;
3. opportunities to interact socially and negotiate meaning with an interested audience;
4. understanding of the socio cultural aspects of the language and opportunities to practice them;
5. opportunities to gain sufficient comprehensible input and produce useful output;
6. resources, scaffolding, and feedback when needed (for example modeling, bridging to students' background experiences, contextualizing, formative assessments);
7. materials, topics, and tool uses that are authentic and sufficiently challenging to the student;
8. support to focus on both meaning and form;
9. integration of the various language skills and focused practice for the development of reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills across the curriculum;
10. opportunities to participate in a variety of assessments;
11. support for cognitive abilities, strategies, and critical thinking skills required in language learning.

(Egbert, 2018, p. 3798).

APPENDIX D

TESOL Technology Standards for Teachers

- Goal 1. Language teachers acquire and maintain foundational knowledge and skills in technology for professional purposes.
 - Standard 1: Language teachers demonstrate knowledge and skill in basic technological concepts and operational competence, meeting or exceeding TESOL Technology Standards for Students in whatever situation they teach.
 - Standard 2: Language teachers demonstrate understanding of a wide range of technology supports for language learning and options for using them in a given setting.
 - Standard 3: Language teachers actively strive to expand their skills and knowledge base to evaluate, adopt, and adapt emerging technologies throughout their careers.
 - Standard 4: Language teachers use technology in socially and culturally appropriate, legal and ethical ways.
- Goal 2. Language teachers integrate pedagogical knowledge and skills with technology to enhance language learning and teaching.
 - Standard 1: Language teachers identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.
 - Standard 2: Language teachers coherently integrate technology into their pedagogical approaches.
 - Standard 3: Language teachers design and manage language learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives.
 - Standard 4: Language teachers use relevant research findings to inform the planning of language learning activities and tasks that involve technology
- Goal 3. Language teachers apply technology in record-keeping, feedback and assessment.
 - Standard 1: Language teachers evaluate and implement relevant technology to aid in effective learner assessment.
 - Standard 2: Language teachers use technological resources to collect and analyse information in order to enhance instruction and learning
 - Standard 3: Language teachers evaluate the effectiveness of specific student uses of technology to enhance teaching and learning.
- Goal 4. Language teachers use technology to improve communication, collaboration, and efficiency.

- Standard 1: Language teachers use communication technologies to maintain effective contact and collaboration with peers, students, administration, and other stakeholders,
- Standard 2: Language teachers regularly reflect on the intersection of professional practice and technological developments so that they can make informed decisions regarding the use of technology to support language learning and communication.
- Standard 3: Language teachers apply technology to improve efficiency in preparing for class, grading, and maintaining records.

(Healey, 2011)

APPENDIX E

PET Speaking Exam description

About the Speaking test

The Speaking test lasts 10 to 12 minutes. You take the test with another candidate. There are two examiners in the room. One examiner talks to you and the other examiner listens to you. Both the examiners give you marks.

Part 1

The examiners introduce themselves and then one examiner asks you and your partner to say your names and your candidate numbers. This examiner asks you to find out information about each other by asking questions. The examiner will also ask you to spell something.

Part 2

The examiner asks you to talk about something together and gives you a drawing to help you. Remember that you need to talk with your partner in this part and discuss the topic together.

Part 3

You each have a chance to talk by yourselves. The examiner gives you a colour photograph to look at and asks you to talk about it. When you have finished talking, the examiner gives your partner a different photograph to look at and to talk about.

Part 4

The examiner asks you and your partner to say more about the subject of the photographs in Part 3. You may be asked to give your opinion or to talk about something that has happened to you. You need to talk with your partner in this part of the test.

If you do not understand something the examiner says to you, then you can ask the examiner to repeat what he/she has said. You do not lose marks for this, but you should not need to do this often during the test.

(University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2001, p. 45)

APPENDIX F

Reflective questionnaires

Name of the participant: A Age: 12 Grade: 6th	ELSA Speak	Google Translate	Sound Forge Pro	Hello Talk	iTranslate Converse
I knew about/used this tool before testing it.	×	×	×	×	×
I think that the interface of the tool is user-friendly.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I feel more confident about my speaking skills after testing the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I think that my speaking accuracy improved by using the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I can see myself using this tool in my free time to improve my language skills.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Comments: Thank you for showing me Google Translate. It is a real life-saver. ELSA Speak is very cool.					

Name of the participant: T Age: 14 Grade: 8th	ELSA Speak	Google Translate	Sound Forge Pro	Hello Talk	iTranslate Converse
I knew about/used this tool before testing it.	✓	✓	×	×	×
I think that the interface of the tool is user-friendly.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I feel more confident about my speaking skills after testing the tool.	×	×	×	✓	×
I think that my speaking accuracy improved by using the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I can see myself using this tool in my free time to improve my language skills.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Comments: I was already quite confident in my speaking skills before the research so that is why ticked disagree. But, I feel more confident because of our with you so, thank you for that. Also, iTranslate Converse looks really promising, and it is a shame that it corrects mistakes without telling us we made a mistake.					

Name of the participant: M Age: 12 Grade: 6th	ELSA Speak	Google Translate	Sound Forge Pro	Hello Talk	iTranslate Converse
I knew about/used this tool before testing it.	×	×	×	×	×
I think that the interface of the tool is user-friendly.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I feel more confident about my speaking skills after testing the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I think that my speaking accuracy improved by using the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I can see myself using this tool in my free time to improve my language skills.	✓	✓	×	×	×
Comments: I do not like that ELSA Speak and HelloTalk are paid, and you cannot really use them without paying. But my parent told me that if you recommend it then I can choose one of them and they will pay for it for me.					

Name of the participant: V Age: 13 Grade: 7th	ELSA Speak	Google Translate	Sound Forge Pro	Hello Talk	iTranslate Converse
I knew about/used this tool before testing it.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I think that the interface of the tool is user-friendly.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I feel more confident about my speaking skills after testing the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I think that my speaking accuracy improved by using the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I can see myself using this tool in my free time to improve my language skills.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Comments: ELSA Speak and Hello Talk were definitely the best apps. I use Google Translate almost daily and I think ELSA speak is very helpful and educational.					

Name of the participant: R Age: 15 Grade: 9th	ELSA Speak	Google Translate	Sound Forge Pro	Hello Talk	iTranslate Converse
I knew about/used this tool before testing it	×	×	×	×	×
I think that the interface of the tool is user-friendly.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I feel more confident about my speaking skills after testing the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	✓
I think that my speaking accuracy improved by using the tool.	✓	✓	×	✓	×
I can see myself using this tool in my free time to improve my language skills	✓	✓	×	✓	×
Comments: I liked all the apps. It is only a shame that Sound Forge Pro turned out to be a waste of money. I am grateful to you for showing me these apps, especially the advanced features of Google Translate					

APPENDIX G

PRIOR TO THE RESEARCH TESTING

Name of the participant: A

Word choice	3
Pronunciation	2
Grammar	2
Overall impression	2

Name of the participant: T

Word choice	3
Pronunciation	3
Grammar	3
Overall impression	3

Name of the participant: M

Word choice	2
Pronunciation	2
Grammar	3
Overall impression	2

Name of the participant: V

Word choice	3
Pronunciation	4
Grammar	3
Overall impression	3

Name of the participant: R

Word choice	4
Pronunciation	4
Grammar	4
Overall impression	4

POST RESEARCH TESTING

Name of the participant: A

Word choice	4
Pronunciation	3
Grammar	3
Overall impression	3

Name of the participant: T

Word choice	4
Pronunciation	4
Grammar	3
Overall impression	4

Name of the participant: M

Word choice	3
Pronunciation	3
Grammar	3
Overall impression	3

Name of the participant: V

Word choice	4
Pronunciation	5
Grammar	4
Overall impression	4

Name of the participant: R

Word choice	5
Pronunciation	5
Grammar	4
Overall impression	5

SHRNUTÍ

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá tématem využití technologií k podpoře řečových dovedností. Zvláštní pozornost je věnována především způsobům výuky s moderními technologiemi, jako je CALL a MALL, a aplikacím a platformám, které mají zlepšit přesnost mluvení studentů. Práce obsahuje teoretická východiska, která seznamují čtenáře se základními informacemi o teorii tvorby řeči a metodice výuky mluveného projevu. Dále je uveden popis výzkumu. Výzkum probíhal prostřednictvím pozorování jednotlivých studentů v jazykové škole, kteří testovali pět nástrojů. Cílem bylo zjistit, které z nástrojů jsou vhodné pro podporu přesnosti mluveného projevu na základě subjektivního názoru studentů v reflektivních diskusích a standardizovaném testování, ke kterému došlo před a po výzkumu. Výsledky výzkumu jsou doplněny reflektivními dotazníky studentů. Výzkumu ukázal, že většina nástrojů zahrnutých do výzkumu je vhodná pro podporu přesnosti mluveného projevu, ale před začleněním jakéhokoli nástroje do výuky by je učitelé měli předem otestovat a určit, zda prokazatelně zlepšuje efektivitu nebo činnost vyučovací jednotky.