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# TECHNOLOGY AIDED ACTIVITIES FOR JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN FOCUS

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore whether students perceive that the technology aided activities for Junior High School support the development of their oral speaking skills, whether students consider that the out-of-class speaking activities contributed to building their level of confidence with respect to using the target structures and vocabulary in the classroom, and the advantages and/or challenges they perceive in using computer-mediated communicative out-of-class activities to improve their speaking skills during the pandemic. A further aim of this study is to investigate whether the use of technology aided activities out-of-class speaking activities supports the development of students' willingness to communicate, measured by using students' performance on different online activities. The research was conducted in selected public Junior High School who were chosen among Junior High School students on a voluntary basis. The data for this research were collected via in-depth interview, which was conducted at the middle of the study. Also, the study showed that there was a significant contribution to the students' willingness to communicate in the target language as they became more confident as well as more comfortable speaking English.

**KEY WORDS:** *Technology, aided, English, activities, junior high school, oral communication, skills, focus*

## INTRODUCTION

Technology aided activities is an umbrella term that encompasses various forms of human communication through networked computers, which can be synchronous or asynchronous and involve one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many exchanges of text, audio, and/or video messages.

I consider this as a problem because technology alters the processes and outcomes of social interaction and group processes, addressing issues such as how people express and construe self-identity, form and manage impressions, develop and maintain relationships, build communities, collaborate at a distance and make collective decisions, mostly in contrast to non-mediated, face-to-face communication. As such, core theories that guided earlier studies highlight the dearth of socio-contextual information as the defining characteristic of computer mediated communication working to its disadvantage. However, they were soon challenged by alternative models underscoring individual users' active accommodation to the limited channel capacity and even more strategic appropriation of the constraints of the medium.

In a similar vein, the dichotomous view that differentiates the "real" from the "virtual" gradually was replaced by the perspective that underscores the blurring boundary and the fluid interaction between the two. At the same time, researchers have also investigated who turns to online communication as opposed to offline, face-to-face interaction, and with what consequences. Going beyond dyadic interaction between unacquainted individuals, social and psychological implications of technology aided activities have also been examined in various contexts, such as distributed workgroups (computer-supported cooperative work: CSCW), social network sites (SNSs), and online games.

Technology aided English activities for Junior High School is a generic term now commonly used for a variety of systems that enable people to communicate with other people by means of computers and networks. Well-known examples of such systems include computer conferencing, electronic mail, discussion lists, and bulletin boards. However, there are yet other possible applications of technology, both in the work environment and in education and training.

In the work environment of United Kingdom, a common and growing phenomenon is collaborative work by individuals or groups who are separated from each other by either time or distance. This has come to be called computer supported cooperative work (CSCW) (Grief, 1988). In the education and training context, in addition to computer "conferencing," we can set up technology aided discussions of a more-focused nature as exemplified by the so-called virtual classroom (Hiltz, 1986, 1990), computer-mediated seminars and case study discussions (Romiszowski & DeHaas, 1989) and technology aided job "performance support systems" (Gery, 1991). The variety of alternative modalities is large and growing. In this chapter we shall limit our discussion to those approaches that have been implemented for a few years and have therefore generated a reasonable quantity of research on their effectiveness and operational characteristics.

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the benefits of technology aided English activities for Junior High School learners even up to this day. Due to the lack of research on technology aided activities and online speaking practice, the results of this study will contribute to the existing literature by giving further insight into the use of speaking activities during online class. Thus, the study will demonstrate how additional language practice opportunities may be created by using computer technology.

At the local level, this study will demonstrate how digital technology can be used as a tool to increase students' opportunities to communicate orally in English. The use of innovative online technology is likely to also positively affect students' motivation to learn. As Egan (2019) states computers have a role to play in learning to speak, and researchers have asserted that online communicative activities can help learners develop interactive competence (Blake, 2000; Chun, 1994; Smith, 2003).

Students are expected to take advantage of the possibilities for communication offered by the electronic age and increase communicative skills by being more motivated. Owing to the positive results related to interactive communication, researchers (Blake, 2000; Chun, 2019; Smith, 2003) have claimed that learners can develop interactive competence through online oral activities.

Moreover, by analyzing students' performance on online activities, this study will demonstrate how such activities can positively impact students learning during blended learning modality. It will also attempt to contribute to curriculum development in terms of integrating online interactive and personalized activities into existing curriculum and, thereby, encourage the organization of the teaching-learning environment in a more learner-centered way.

## METHODOLOGY

**Research Design**

The researcher made these qualitative assumptions that consist of the methods used in the process of qualitative research (Creswell 2003). The procedures used by the researcher are inductive and are based on the researcher's own experience in collecting and analyzing data. The research here is the product of the values of the researcher. Through an inductive approach, raw textual data is condensed into a brief, summary format. Clear links are established between research objectives and summary findings derived from raw data. A framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes that are evident from the raw data is developed.

A phenomenological study describes the meaning of lived experiences of individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2003) was used in this study. A phenomenological study intends to understand and describe an event from the point of view of the participants. A key characteristic of this approach is to study how members of a group or community interpret themselves, the world, and the life around them (Mertens, 2005).

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**Participants and Sampling**
All of the participants were between 18 years old and above and are teachers in selected public schools in Davao City. These participants are currently teaching in the first semester of school year 2022-2023. A total of 10 participants are considered in this study who will join the in-depth interview and focused group discussion. Six of them will join the in-depth interview (IDI) while the remaining four will be subjected to the focus group discussion (FGD). All data gathered during IDI and FGD will be recorded and transmuted to summarize the responses of the participants in an orderly manner. Below are the inclusion criteria of the participants.

**Research Instruments**
Semi-Structured Interviews
Patton (2005) proposes researchers conduct interviews to learn the things they cannot directly observe. Qualitative interviewing is not used to get answers to questions, but to understand the experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of that experience (Seidman, 2016). Generally, qualitative studies use unstructured, open-ended interviews, because they allow for the most flexibility and responsiveness to emerging issues for both the participants and interviewer; however, the use of semi-structured interviews is not uncommon and used when the researcher seeks to obtain specific more focused information (Schwandt, 2001).

Semi-structured interviews combine the flexibility of unstructured, open-ended interviews with directionality and an agenda to produce focused, qualitative, textual data (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 2019). This study collected data using semi-structured interviews to explore how the Junior High School teachers improve the technology communicative digital activities as part of their personal, social and academic experiences.

To ensure that the same information was collected from all the participants, an interview guide was used. The interview guide included open-ended questions and topics to help structure the interview, but when needed, the interviewer also explored, probed, and asked additional questions to clarify and expand on a particular topic. The interview guide helped make interviewing several different participants more systematic and comprehensive by defining in advance the issues to be explored (Patton, 2005). The open-ended questions were framed in a way, so the participants could represent their views and perspectives in their own words and terms, in addition to taking the questions in any direction that they chose (Patton, 1990).
Since qualitative research studies subjects in their natural setting, all interviews must be done through face-to-face or virtual interviews using google meet at a time convenient for the participants. All interview sessions were tape-recorded for purposes of transcription. When needed, the researcher used follow-up interviews after transcription to clarify meaning or explore areas in more depth.

**Data Analysis**
The data analysis was done in the qualitative method. To answer the first and second research questions, the researcher analyzed the interviews. Therefore, she did the content analysis of each interview, and the themes were identified. To answer the third research question, the researcher created a rubric and a checklist to determine the progress of students and the increase in the amount of their willingness to promote technology integration for personal, social and academic endeavor. Finally, the questionnaire was used to explore the advantages and disadvantages of these interactive slides in reply to the last research question.

Qualitative data analysis begins with the process of organizing, reducing, and describing the collected data (Schwandt, 2001). Unlike quantitative analysis, there are no prescribed formulas for qualitative analysis. Marshall and Rossman (2006) remind researchers that qualitative analysis does not proceed linearly and is not neat. However, good practice and procedures enhance the credibility of qualitative research. In this last section, the data analysis procedures will be explained and the steps taken to ensure the results from this study are credible, transferable, dependable, and authentic will be thoroughly described.

To guide the data analysis, the researcher used the seven phases of data analysis described by Marshall and Rossman (2006) as a means to reduce data, create manageable pieces, allow for interpretation, and find meaning in the words of the participants. The seven phases included: (a) organizing the data; (b) immersion in the data; (c) generating categories and themes; (d) coding the data; (e) offering interpretations through analytic memos; and (f) searching for alternative understandings (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Data analysis first begins with organizing the data. The organization of the data involved keeping information provided by each participant separate and in sequence with the order of the interviews. The process of organizing the data allowed it to remain manageable, easily accessible, and readily available. The digital audio files from the interviews were carefully transcribed into written form. Electronic folders were established to create an organization for the data collected from each participant**.**

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

First of all, the participants' perceptions gathered via the in-depth interviews and focused group discussion revealed that the digitalized online speaking activities positively impacted students' oral skill performances. Each and every participant was content with the activities in the study as they believed these activities helped them improve their language skills, particularly speaking skills. To be more specific, the participants portrayed a very positive attitude towards these online activities in terms of implementation and improvement in language skills. Some of them found using computer for speaking practice difficult at the outset. Yet they got accustomed to it in time, and they stated in the interviews that they found the implementation different, enjoyable and educational most especially during their online class in oral communication subject.

As stated, this kind of mobile learning has positive attributes to learners and increase the potential of personalized, situated, authentic and informal learning. Moreover, all participants stated these activities helped them develop lexical use as well as oral skills. Also owing to the fact that they evaluated their recordings insufficient or realized their mistakes and wanted make better recordings, each participant deleted one or more of their own.

As a second implication, the study presented the increase in willingness to engage in the second language. The performances of each participant were evaluated via the criteria specifically developed for this aim. The results revealed that they started to use both simple and complex sentences towards the end of the minor structural problems. In addition, the learners started to record and send longer tracts of talk when they got accustomed to the process. These attempts were also evidence to the increase in motivation, self-confidence and the desire to communicate.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As a result of the findings and limitations of the present study, there may be several suggestions for further research. To start with, a follow-up study can be conducted on the teachers who participated in this study to explore possible long-term effects of the implementation on their academic teaching and learning. The main purpose of the study was to understand the impact of the use of digitalized online activities on their speaking skills and the participants' perceptions about whether the use of these out-of-class speaking activities promotes speaking abilities of their students. The effects of such implementation on language skills, such as listening and pronunciation can be investigated in future research studies, as well.

Second, the results may be extended to other similar cases. That is to say, a similar study can be conducted at different senior high preparatory schools or with the teachers who taught oral communication classes.
Third, the study can be conducted as an experimental study with a control and an experimental group. Therefore, the researcher will have the chance to compare the effects of these online activities on two different groups, and discuss the results more quantitatively.

Finally, a study, which includes the participants' oral test performances, may reveal some other significant information about students' language use.

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