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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNOLOGY-INTEGRATED ACTIVITIES IN ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS OF UPPER SECONDARY EFL STUDENTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN UZBEKISTAN AND LITHUANIA

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Abstract: This comparative study investigates the effectiveness of technology-integrated activities in developing English speaking proficiency among 10th–11th grade EFL students in Uzbekistan and Lithuania. Drawing on recent empirical research from both countries, the study compares digital tools (mobile applications, augmented reality, English-language media, and blended learning) used in Uzbekistan with phenomenon-based learning (PhenoBL) and video creation practices in Lithuania. The findings demonstrate that technology-integrated activities significantly improve students' speaking confidence, reduce anxiety, enhance fluency and vocabulary use, and increase motivation. In Uzbekistan, digital resources help overcome limited classroom speaking practice, while in Lithuania, PhenoBL combined with technology fosters real-life communication and emancipates students from fear of mistakes. The study highlights both opportunities and challenges, such as teacher training and infrastructure gaps. Practical recommendations for EFL teachers and policymakers are provided to support effective technology integration in upper secondary education.

Keywords: technology-integrated activities, speaking skills, EFL, upper secondary students, phenomenon-based learning, augmented reality, digital tools, Uzbekistan, Lithuania

INTRODUCTION

Speaking remains one of the most challenging skills for EFL learners in upper secondary schools worldwide. In many contexts, students can read and write English at an acceptable level, yet they struggle to speak fluently due to anxiety, limited real-life practice, and fear of making grammar or pronunciation mistakes. This issue is particularly evident in Uzbekistan and Lithuania, where English is taught as a foreign language and students have few opportunities for authentic communication outside the classroom.

In Uzbekistan, the British Council English Impact Report (2022) reveals that Grade 10 students show relatively low speaking proficiency, with only 8% reaching A2 level and 16% at A1 level. Although 49% of students report some classroom speaking practice, traditional textbook-based methods dominate, and digital resources are still underutilised in many schools. Recent studies highlight that digital tools — such as mobile applications, English-language media (videos and audio), and blended learning — can make lessons more engaging and help students practise speaking more freely (Lingvospektr, 2025; The USA Journals, 2026).

In Lithuania, foreign language teachers increasingly adopt phenomenon-based learning (PhenoBL), where students explore real-world topics and discuss them in English. This approach is often combined with digital tools like video creation. A qualitative study of 15 Lithuanian teachers showed that PhenoBL helps students overcome speaking fears, develop natural vocabulary use, and improve teamwork and public speaking skills (Ciuciulkiene et al., 2023). Video creation activities have also proven effective for vocabulary retention and speaking fluency in Lithuanian ESL classrooms (Jankauskaitė-Jokūbaitienė, 2023).

Augmented reality (AR) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) provide additional evidence of technology's potential. An experimental study found that AR activities significantly improved high-school students' achievement and speaking confidence by combining visual, audio, and interactive elements (Bamanger, 2025). Similarly, digital storytelling and task-based

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technology approaches support speaking skill development across EFL contexts (Marrahi-Gómez & Belda-Medina, 2024).

Despite these promising findings, comparative research between Uzbekistan and Lithuania remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining how technology-integrated activities enhance speaking skills in the two countries. The main research question is:

How effective are technology-integrated activities in enhancing speaking proficiency among 10th–11th grade EFL students in Uzbekistan and Lithuania?

Methodology

This study employs a comparative analysis based on secondary empirical data from published research in Uzbekistan and Lithuania. No new primary data were collected. Instead, reliable qualitative and quantitative studies were systematically reviewed and synthesised to identify common patterns and contextual differences.

The main sources include:

- The British Council English Impact Report – Uzbekistan (2022), which provides large-scale data on Grade 10 students' speaking proficiency and digital resource use.
- Uzbek studies on digital tools and media in high-school English instruction (The USA Journals, 2026; Lingvospektr, 2025; InLibrary, 2025).
- The qualitative study of 15 Lithuanian foreign language teachers using PhenoBL (Ciuciulkiene et al., 2023).
- Research on video creation in Lithuanian ESL classrooms (Jankauskaitė-Jokūbaitienė, 2023).
- Supporting international studies on AR, MALL, and digital storytelling in EFL speaking (Bamanger, 2025; Marrahi-Gómez & Belda-Medina, 2024).

Data were organised into three main categories for comparison: (1) student motivation and speaking confidence, (2) improvement in fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy, and (3) practical challenges for teachers and schools. All sources were critically evaluated for relevance, recency, and methodological rigour.

Results

The analysis shows consistent positive effects of technology-integrated activities on speaking skills in both countries, though the approaches differ.

In Uzbekistan, digital tools and English-language media significantly increase student engagement. The British Council report (2022) indicates low baseline speaking levels, but studies on digital integration report improved participation when teachers use videos, mobile apps, and blended learning (Lingvospektr, 2025). One study in Karakalpakstan found that digital tools (applications and platforms) helped high-school students develop communication skills through interactive tasks and authentic exposure (The USA Journals, 2026). Another study emphasised that English-language media (video and audio) enhanced speaking fluency and pronunciation at the senior secondary level (InLibrary, 2025). Teachers noted that students felt more comfortable recording themselves privately before presenting, which reduced anxiety.

In Lithuania, PhenoBL combined with technology yields strong results. Teachers reported that investigating real-life phenomena encouraged students to speak more naturally and overcome fear of mistakes (Ciuciulkiene et al., 2023). Video creation activities were particularly effective: students improved vocabulary retention, writing-to-speaking transfer, and overall engagement (Jankauskaitė-Jokūbaitienė, 2023). The OECD report on upper secondary education in Lithuania (2023) highlights the growing role of digital competencies, noting that flexible, student-centred approaches like PhenoBL prepare learners better for real-world communication.

Comparative findings reveal clear benefits:

- Confidence and reduced anxiety: Both contexts show technology lowers speaking fear. Uzbek students benefit from private practice via mobile tools; Lithuanian students gain confidence through collaborative PhenoBL projects.

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- Fluency and vocabulary: AR and media in Uzbekistan, and video/PhenoBL in Lithuania, improve natural language use and pronunciation. AR produced statistically significant gains in achievement (Bamanger, 2025).

- Challenges: Uzbek teachers face infrastructure and training gaps (World Science Pub, 2026). Lithuanian teachers need more timetable flexibility and cross-subject collaboration.

Overall, technology-integrated activities proved effective in both countries, with the strongest outcomes when tools were combined with meaningful, real-life tasks.

Discussion and conclusion

The results align with constructivist and multimodal learning theories: when students actively explore real topics using technology, speaking becomes authentic, interactive, and less intimidating. In Uzbekistan, digital resources address the gap between receptive and productive skills noted in the British Council report (2022). In Lithuania, PhenoBL complements digital tools by focusing on communication rather than perfection, consistent with findings on video creation (Jankauskaitė-Jokūbaitienė, 2023).

AR and MALL studies further confirm that multimodal input (visual + audio + interaction) accelerates speaking development (Bamanger, 2025; Marrahi-Gómez & Belda-Medina, 2024). However, success depends on teacher training and infrastructure — challenges common to both countries.

This study has limitations. It relies on secondary data rather than a single controlled experiment across both countries. Future research should include quasi-experimental designs with pre- and post-tests involving the same age group in Uzbekistan and Lithuania.

In conclusion, technology-integrated activities are highly effective for enhancing speaking skills of upper secondary EFL students in Uzbekistan and Lithuania. They increase confidence, fluency, and motivation while reducing anxiety. For grant-funded projects, a hybrid model combining Uzbek digital tools with Lithuanian PhenoBL principles would be particularly powerful.

Recommendations

- Teachers should begin with simple, free tools (video recording, English-language media, basic AR apps) and gradually incorporate real-life topics.

- Schools should provide regular professional development on technology integration and blended learning.

- Policymakers should improve internet access in secondary schools and support cross-country collaboration between Uzbekistan and Lithuania.

Implementing these measures will help EFL students in both countries develop stronger speaking skills, preparing them for higher education and global opportunities.

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