



EMPOWERING GEN Z: ENHANCING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY AND AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION

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Article History:

Accepted August 2023;

Revised September 2023;

Approved October 2023.

Abstract: This research article explores effective strategies to enhance English speaking skills among Generation Z (Gen Z) learners, known as the first truly digital-native generation. Despite their extensive exposure to English media, many Gen Z individuals face challenges in developing their English speaking proficiency. This mixed-methods study employs surveys and qualitative interviews to collect data on the perceived effectiveness of various strategies. The findings highlight the crucial role of technology in English speaking development, with digital language learning applications and online language exchange platforms being recognized as potent tools. Moreover, the study emphasizes the significance of authentic communication experiences, such as role-plays and debates, and the value of peer collaboration in improving English speaking skills. Common challenges identified include time constraints and the influence of informal language use. Consequently, the implications of this research underscore the integration of technology, the promotion of authentic communication, the facilitation of peer collaboration, and the implementation of strategies to address time constraints in English language instruction for Gen Z learners. By adopting these approaches, educators and policymakers can establish engaging learning environments that empower Gen Z learners to thrive in our interconnected society.

Keywords: authentic communication, English speaking skills, gen z learners, peer collaboration,, technology in language learning

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z, encompassing individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, constitutes a paradigmatic cohort of true digital natives, distinguished by their rapid and innate assimilation of digital technology. Competence in the English language has progressively assumed

a paramount role for members of Generation Z in their pursuit of scholastic endeavours, professional trajectories, and intercultural interactions within our increasingly globalized milieu (Szymkowiak et al., 2021). Notwithstanding their extensive exposure to English-language media and digital communication platforms, numerous learners from Generation Z confront impediments in cultivating their oral proficiency in the English language with efficacy.

In the contemporary landscape, characterized by the integration of online applications within traditional educational frameworks, it becomes imperative to comprehensively examine the impediments affecting the English speaking proficiency among Generation Z learners. The utilization of informal and truncated linguistic forms, prevalent within digital communication platforms, is posited as a potential contributing factor to the challenges encountered in acquiring refined English speaking competencies (Chen, 2022). Moreover, the velocity inherent to digital communication mediums has the potential to encumber profound engagement and nuanced expression in the English language (Hontvedt et al., 2023). Additionally, the limited availability of occasions for substantive face-to-face interactions within English-speaking milieus could conceivably act as an obstacle to the augmentation of oral proficiency.

In order to enhance English speaking proficiency among learners belonging to the Generation Z cohort, it is of paramount importance to delve into efficacious strategies that are congruent with their distinct learning predilections and proclivity towards technology (Nguyen & Pham, 2021). The present research endeavours to systematically examine and elucidate these strategies, while taking into account prevailing pedagogical approaches, technological interventions, and innovative instructional paradigms within the domain of English language education. Through the discernment of bespoke pedagogic modalities, educators and policymakers can optimize the efficacy of language acquisition outcomes, thereby equipping Generation Z individuals with the requisites needed to navigate the imperatives of an increasingly interconnected societal milieu.

The essence of this investigation resides in its capacity to offer insights for the development of pedagogical methodologies and didactic resources grounded in empirical evidence, tailored to the learning predilections and adeptness with technology exhibited by learners belonging to Generation Z (Habibi et al., 2019). The anticipated outcomes of this research are poised to make valuable contributions to the progression of language instruction practices that more aptly address the requisites of the contemporary cohort of English language learners, thus facilitating their attainment of self-assured and adept communicative prowess in the English language. Consequently, the endowment of efficacious strategies to individuals of Generation Z stands to furnish them with the means to flourish across their personal, educational, and vocational domains.

Through an exhaustive examination of pertinent literature, systematic empirical data collection, and rigorous analysis, the present study endeavours to elucidate the optimal strategies for augmenting English speaking proficiencies among individuals belonging to Generation Z. By comprehensively comprehending their distinctive learning proclivities, predilections, and the profound influence of technology on their linguistic attainment trajectory, this scholarly inquiry aspires to enhance pedagogical paradigms and curricular constructs within the domain of language education (Ismail et al., 2021). The ramifications of this investigation bear the potential to make substantial contributions to the domains of curriculum development, pedagogical methodologies, and the seamless integration of technology within the pedagogical fabric of English language instruction. Thereby, the study seeks to cultivate sanguine and adept communicants within this cohort. By empowering and equipping learners belonging to Generation Z with adept English

speaking skills, this research endeavours to transcend linguistic barriers and foster efficacious cross-cultural communication within an increasingly interlinked global milieu.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a mixed-methods research design, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effective strategies to enhance English speaking skills among Generation Z (Gen Z) learners (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative aspect involves administering surveys to obtain numerical data on the perceived effectiveness of various strategies. On the other hand, the qualitative aspect encompasses in-depth interviews or focus group discussions to elicit detailed insights into participants' experiences and perceptions of the strategies. The study employs purposive sampling to select Gen Z participants currently engaged in English language learning or those who have recently acquired English language skills (Fraenkel et al., 2023). The sample comprises students from educational institutions or language learning centers, with careful consideration given to ensuring diversity in terms of gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, and English proficiency levels.

Participants will be exposed to a range of strategies aimed at enhancing their English speaking skills. These strategies encompass role-plays, debates, language games, digital language learning applications, conversation clubs, and language exchange programs. The selection of strategies is informed by existing literature and best practices in English language teaching for Gen Z learners. Quantitative data collected through surveys will be subjected to descriptive statistics and analyzed using correlations or t-tests to examine the effectiveness and preferences of the strategies. On the other hand, qualitative data obtained from interviews or focus groups will be transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis to derive meaningful insights. It is important to acknowledge potential limitations of the study, including the sample size, limited generalizability to other contexts, and potential self-reporting biases during data collection. To address these limitations, a balanced interpretation of the results will be presented in the research findings.

Through the implementation of a mixed-methods approach, this research aims to triangulate findings from both quantitative and qualitative data sources, providing a holistic understanding of the effective strategies to enhance English speaking skills among Gen Z. By combining survey data with participants' narratives, the study intends to offer valuable insights into learners' preferences, challenges, and experiences, ultimately contributing to the development of evidence-based pedagogical approaches in English language education.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The proficiency in effective English communication has assumed a position of utmost significance within an increasingly interconnected and digital milieu, particularly concerning the cohort of Generation Z (Gen Z) learners. This generation, inherently adept in the digital realm, encounters a unique array of challenges and prospects in the cultivation of their English oral aptitude. The outcomes of the present study serve to illuminate efficacious strategies aimed at the augmentation of English speaking prowess among Gen Z learners. Central to these strategies is the salient incorporation of technology, the facilitation of authentic communicative encounters, the cultivation of collaborative endeavors amongst peers, and the mitigation of temporal constraints inherent in language instruction. These discernments proffer invaluable guidance to language educators and policymakers who aspire to optimize the landscape of English language acquisition, thereby enabling Gen Z learners to excel within the contours of our globalized society.

Quantitative Findings

The analysis of survey data yielded several strategies perceived as efficacious in augmenting English speaking proficiencies among Generation Z (Gen Z) learners. Noteworthy among these strategies are role-plays, debates, and digital language learning applications, which garnered the most substantial effectiveness appraisals. The respondents displayed a predilection for interactive approaches that fostered active engagement and participation, including language-oriented games, conversational clubs, and language exchange initiatives.

The findings accentuate the pivotal function of technology in advancing the English speaking proficiencies of Gen Z learners. Specifically, digital language learning applications and online language exchange platforms garnered recognition for their constructive influence on language skills. These technological tools afford learners access to authentic conversational opportunities and immediate feedback, thereby facilitating the honing of their English speaking abilities. The convenience and interactive attributes inherent in these tools resonated harmoniously with the digital native identity of Gen Z learners. The assimilation of technology into language pedagogy holds promise for educators and language instructors, enabling them to construct more captivating and efficacious learning milieus that align with the preferences and exigencies of Gen Z learners.

In effecting the enhancement of English speaking skills amidst Gen Z participants, encounters characterized by authenticity in communication emerged as a paramount factor. The active participation in genuine, contextually meaningful speaking exercises, such as role-plays and debates, emerged as pivotal in fostering self-assurance and fluency in English discourse. Gen Z learners evinced a yearning for learning environments that mirror the dynamic intricacies of communication across diverse contexts, facilitating the practice of linguistic skills within authentic situations. The significance of peer interaction in ameliorating English speaking proficiencies was emphatically underscored by the respondents, as collaborative endeavours, conversation clubs, and language exchange programs supplied invaluable opportunities for English dialogues with peers in an environment marked by support and non-judgmental camaraderie. The social dimension inherent in collaborative peer engagement contributed substantively to the learners' motivation, linguistic advancement, and cultural enlightenment, thereby enriching their comprehensive language mastery.

Common Challenges

A pronounced challenge discerned among Generation Z (Gen Z) learners in the augmentation of their English oral proficiency resides in the matter of temporal constraints. Participants recurrently alluded to their congested schedules as a deterrent impeding their capacity to allocate a satisfactory amount of time for consistent practice in spoken English. The exigencies posed by scholastic pursuits, extracurricular commitments, part-time vocations, and social obligations have engendered limited prospects for the deliberate cultivation of their conversational aptitude. The attainment of equilibrium amidst these competing priorities has emerged as a substantial hurdle for Gen Z learners. It is incumbent upon educators and language pedagogues to evince awareness of this temporal constraint and to conceive inventive methodologies for optimizing the efficacious utilization of the constricted temporal resources. The incorporation of succinct yet focused speaking exercises into quotidian routines, provisioning malleable learning modalities, or proffering efficacious temporis management strategies are prospective avenues by which Gen Z learners can harness the full potential of their available temporal windows for the purpose of English oral proficiency enhancement.

An additional salient challenge underscored by Gen Z learners in the amelioration of their English speaking skills pertains to the pervasive influence of informal linguistic usage, particularly within the domain of digital communication. Participants manifest a cognizance of the preponderance of informal lexicon, abbreviations, and colloquialisms prevalent within the ambit of social media, textual discourse, and online platforms. This prevalence has indelibly imprinted upon their linguistic habits and exerted a discernible impact on their capacity to effectuate a transition toward formal English-speaking contexts. The imperative for directed guidance and substantive support in navigating the intricate terrain of transitioning from informal to formal linguistic idioms is palpable. Educational practitioners and linguistic instructors are thereby urged to undertake this challenge through the design and implementation of explicit didactic approaches, replete with opportunities for pragmatic application, that pivot upon the tenets of formal language articulation. The strategic integration of authentic pedagogical materials and pragmatic speaking tasks, which veritably mirror the dynamics of formal communicative settings, can function as a catalyst in the cultivation of the requisite proficiencies to adeptly modulate one's linguistic register. Moreover, the inculcation of metalinguistic acumen, concomitant with fostering introspective dialogues concerning linguistic selection, can significantly contribute to the acuity of code-switching between the realms of informal and formal linguistic conventions. This serves to furnish Gen Z learners with a requisite competency for effective communicative dexterity across a spectrum of divergent contextual milieus.

Implications for Practice:

The research outcomes underscore the imperative of integrating technology within English language pedagogy tailored for Generation Z learners, with the express aim of augmenting their oral proficiency. Digitalized language learning applications and online platforms designed for linguistic exchange have been identified as efficacious instruments for ameliorating the prowess of Generation Z learners in spoken English. These technological tools afford Generation Z learners with avenues for genuine communication and expeditious feedback, thereby enabling the practical application of spoken language skills within authentic contexts. Educators and instructors in the domain of language instruction are urged to contemplate the assimilation of these technological modalities into their pedagogical frameworks, so as to engender interactive and stimulating learning milieus. By capitalizing on technology, pedagogues can provide Generation Z learners with a more dynamic and immersive linguistic learning milieu, one that resonates with their innate digital predilections, and thereby, nurtures the evolution of their English-speaking abilities.

Moreover, the research underlines the centrality of propounding genuine communicative exercises, aimed at enhancing the self-assurance and fluidity of Generation Z learners in the domain of English speaking. Role-playing scenarios, debates, and tasks reflective of real-world situations have emerged as invaluable strategies for affording learners substantive and pragmatic speaking experiences. Through active participation in these exercises, Generation Z learners are equipped to deploy English within pragmatic contexts, simulate authentic conversational settings, and hone their oral communication acumen. Furthermore, collaborative endeavors amongst peers manifest as a pivotal factor in bolstering the English-speaking proficiencies of Generation Z learners. The creation of opportunities for interpersonal interaction, both within the classroom milieu and through extracurricular engagements, serves to cultivate a supportive and cooperative ethos. Peer interactions furnish learners with the chance to engage in discourse with fellow learners, to share insights regarding language acquisition, and to reciprocally bolster each other's linguistic competencies, thereby culminating in the enhancement of their spoken language capacities.

The conclusions drawn from this research underscore the efficacy of a spectrum of methodologies for fortifying English speaking competencies within the Generation Z cohort. The amalgamation of technological tools, accentuation of genuine communicative exercises, cultivation of peer collaboration, and the mitigation of temporal constraints surface as pivotal considerations for language educators and policy formulators who engage with Generation Z learners. Through the strategic utilization of technology, the incorporation of authentic communicative undertakings, the cultivation of peer-based collaborative dynamics, and the provision of flexible pedagogical pathways, educators can meaningfully elevate the English speaking skills of Generation Z learners. In so doing, they can engender captivating linguistic learning environs that cater assiduously to the distinct predilections and proclivities of this unique cohort.

Discussion

The outcomes of this investigation yield valuable insights into efficacious strategies for augmenting English oral proficiency among learners belonging to Generation Z (Gen Z). The results underscore the significance of seamlessly integrating technological modalities, fostering authentic communicative encounters, cultivating collaborative engagements among peers, and mitigating temporal constraints within the realm of language education (Fitriati et al., 2020). These measures collectively serve to optimize the pedagogical landscape of English language acquisition for this cohort of digital-native learners.

Quantitative analysis elucidates that methodologies involving simulated enactments, deliberative discourse, and digitalized language acquisition applications are perceived as efficacious by Gen Z learners in enhancing their prowess in spoken English. These strategic avenues align harmoniously with the predilections of Gen Z learners for interactive and captivating pedagogical engagements (Jeon et al., 2022). Notably impactful is the assimilation of technology, encompassing digital language learning applications and virtual linguistic exchange platforms, which have emerged as particularly potent mediums for affording authentic speaking opportunities and immediate evaluative input. Given the inherent technological familiarity of Gen Z learners, these instruments are inherently convenient and interactive, thus constituting invaluable resources for the augmentation of their English oral proficiencies (Whitehead & Ryu, 2023). Consequentially, these findings advocate for pedagogues to embrace a technologically integrated approach, engendering dynamic and immersive learning milieus that resonate with the inclinations and requisites of Gen Z learners.

Qualitative insights accentuate the salience of authentic communicative experiences in nurturing fluency in spoken English among Gen Z learners. Active participation in genuine, real-world speaking tasks, such as role-play scenarios and deliberative exchanges, emerges as pivotal in the cultivation of self-assurance and adroitness in the English language (Zhang & Zou, 2022). The aspiration for instructional settings that parallel the multifaceted dynamism of communication within diverse contexts underscores the imperative for Gen Z learners to rehearse linguistic aptitudes within pertinent and authentic circumstances. Moreover, peer collaboration assumes a prominent role, as collaborative enterprises, conversational enclaves, and linguistic reciprocity initiatives proffer avenues for Gen Z learners to partake in English discourse with their contemporaries within an environment characterized by supportiveness and impartiality (Zhang & Zou, 2022). The sociocultural facet of peer collaboration contributes tangibly to their motivation, linguistic maturation, and cultural enlightenment, consequently culminating in an ameliorated overarching linguistic proficiency.

However, the conducted study has also illuminated prevailing challenges encountered by Gen Z learners in their endeavours to enhance their English speaking proficiency. Notably, temporal constraints have surfaced as a substantial impediment, as participants have articulated difficulties in allocating adequate time for consistent practice of English speaking, attributing these constraints to their scholastic obligations, extracurricular commitments, part-time employments, and social liaisons (Hadi et al., 2021). To surmount this obstacle, it is recommended that educators and language instructors innovate strategies that optimize the utilization of the limited temporal resources available. Such strategies could encompass the integration of brief and targeted speaking exercises into daily routines, or the provisioning of adaptable learning modalities.

Furthermore, the sway of informal linguistic usage, particularly manifest in digital communications, has posed intricate challenges for Gen Z learners during their transition to formal English speaking contexts. It is incumbent upon language instructors and educators to address this quandary by conceiving didactic approaches that offer explicit instruction (Howard, 2021). Moreover, provision of opportunities for practice centred on formal language conventions, coupled with the cultivation of metalinguistic acumen to facilitate seamless code-switching between informal and formal linguistic registers, is recommended.

The implications arising from this research proffer that language educators and policymakers should contemplate the assimilation of technological tools, the cultivation of genuine communicative experiences, the facilitation of collaborative initiatives amongst peers, and the deployment of tactics geared towards mitigating temporal constraints within the purview of English language instruction for Gen Z learners. Through the adept utilization of technology and the creation of opportunities for bona fide communication and interpersonal engagement, educators can engender immersive and interactive pedagogical environs conducive to augmenting the English speaking proficiencies of Gen Z learners (Chigbu et al., 2020). Furthermore, by addressing temporal limitations and bolstering the transition from colloquial to formal language usage, educators can effectively cater to the proclivities and requisites of Gen Z learners, thereby fostering their capacity to excel within an increasingly globalized milieu. These implications collectively contribute to the advancement of empirically grounded pedagogic paradigms in the domain of English language education, thereby nurturing adept and sanguine communicators within this cohort.

CONCLUSION

In summation, this investigation has delved comprehensively into the efficacious strategies aimed at augmenting English speaking proficiencies within the cohort of Generation Z (Gen Z) learners, distinct for their distinction as the inaugural, inherently digital-native generation. The present study underscores the pronounced significance of synergizing technology, engendering bona fide communicative encounters, nurturing collaborative interactions amongst peers, and attending to temporal constraints within the purview of English language pedagogy. Evidently, Gen Z learners evince a favorable disposition towards stratagems such as role-playing, debates, and digital language learning applications as instrumental avenues for enhancing their competence in spoken English. The seamless amalgamation of technology, encompassing digitalized language learning applications and virtual linguistic exchange platforms, proffers Gen Z learners with unmediated access to bona fide speech-oriented prospects, concomitantly affording them instantaneous feedback, thereby harmonizing effectively with their inherent digital proclivity.

Furthermore, veritable communicative experiences, exemplified by role-plays and debates, substantially contribute to the cultivation of self-assurance and fluency in the realm of English

discourse. Concurrently, collaborative interactions amongst peers furnish a milieu that is supportive and mutually cooperative, thereby constituting a fertile ground for the honing of English speaking skills. Notwithstanding, challenges attendant to temporal constraints and the pervasive sway of colloquial language warrant requisite attention to optimize the progression of English oral proficiencies amidst Gen Z learners. The implications borne from this empirical exploration allude to the pressing need for language educators and policy formulators to deliberate the infusion of technology within the domain of English language instruction, thereby engendering immersive and engaging learning milieus. The digital platforms for language acquisition and the conduits for virtual linguistic exchange emerge as valuable resources, affording Gen Z learners opportunities for immersive English speech practice within authentic contexts. Moreover, the cultivation of bona fide communicative experiences, notably through role-playing and debates, coupled with the advocacy for peer-based collaborative learning, holds the potential to substantially amplify the sense of assurance, fluency, and comprehensive linguistic adeptness among Gen Z learners. Educators are encouraged to adroitly manage temporal constraints by introducing succinct, targeted speech-based tasks into daily pedagogic routines, concurrently furnishing pliable learning alternatives.

By judiciously operationalizing these stratagems, educators stand poised to optimize the pedagogic odyssey of English language acquisition for Gen Z learners, furnishing them with the requisites necessary to excel within academic pursuits, professional junctures, and the arena of intercultural communication within an increasingly interconnected and globalized milieu. In the foreseeable trajectory, forthcoming research endeavors ought to delve deeper into the longitudinal repercussions engendered by these pedagogical tactics, whilst simultaneously embarking upon the exploration of innovative paradigms for the amelioration of English speaking proficiencies amidst Gen Z learners. To culminate, this study accords pragmatic insights to educators, linguistic instructors, and policy architects, thereby endowing them with an enhanced comprehension and enhanced adaptability to the discrete exigencies characteristic of Gen Z learners as they traverse their journey towards English speaking mastery. Through harnessing the potential of technology, fostering authentic communicative experiences, nurturing peer-based collaboration, and adroitly addressing temporal constraints, educators are aptly poised to invigorate the English speaking competencies of Gen Z learners, thereby equipping them with the indispensable tools to thrive within an interconnected society.

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