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INTEGRATING TECHNOLOGY IN EFL CLASSROOMS: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES FOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

This article reviews the emergence of technology in language learning and its implications for teaching the four language skills: speaking, reading, writing, and listening. Along with discussing technology and its mandatory integration during the COVID-19 pandemic, the article compares several studies carried out in schools and universities. Moreover, it examines the challenges that teachers and learners encounter when studying with digital tools.

The key findings indicate that although technology creates challenges for teachers and learners, its role in skill development is essential. Digital tools improve students' engagement, motivate them to progress, allow progress tracking, and enable communication with other learners to compare results. In addition, technology has contributed to greater independence, and lessons can be planned to foster students' active participation. Importantly, pedagogical rules and principles should not be overlooked or sacrificed in the integration of technology.

Keywords: Technology, CALL, ICT, digital learning tools, digital literacy, multimedia, corona virus, distance learning, cognition, online platforms.

Introduction

Technology has become deeply embedded in nearly all domains of contemporary life, including education. Traditional methods of language teaching alone are

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often considered insufficient in contemporary contexts, and technology is expected to be incorporated in the classrooms (Khatoony & Nezhadmehr, 2020). Consequently, a growing range of digital tools, online platforms, educational websites, and e-games are being integrated into language instruction to meet students' needs.

However, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is not a new concept in pedagogy. It emerged in the United States in the 1960s and has undergone three developmental stages: behaviorist CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Despite its early emergence, not all teachers and learners were able to use and integrate computers specifically for language learning purposes until the 1980s (Davies & Steel, 1981). Even after that period, implementation did not occur across all educational settings due to limited awareness, lack of access, high costs, and other challenges.

Although technology integration has many limitations and difficulties, it plays a crucial role in supporting education during critical situations by connecting learners and teachers regardless of location, as demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, both students and teachers were compelled to rely on online platforms, which represent one of the main contexts in which CALL is implemented for language learning. As Khatoony and Nezhadmehr (2020) note, "The coronavirus pandemic has transformed the educational scenario all over the world, where schools and universities were closed for a period of time. Therefore, technology integration was critical during this period to assist teachers in both developed and under-developed countries to connect with students and continue the teaching and learning process" (p. 2).

Along with offering opportunities for more flexible and individualized learning, and access to unlimited resources, technology also creates obstacles for teachers and learners. As Mishra and Koehler (2006) state, merely familiarizing the educational process with technology is insufficient. Challenges include a lack of teachers' and students' technical knowledge (Mishra & Koehler, 2006), or in

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other words, digital illiteracy (Zhang, 2023), difficulties in curriculum design (Mauliska et al., 2024), limited access to digital tools, and unstable internet connections. Moreover, integrating technology into the teaching of the four language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening) requires diverse applications, pedagogical approaches, and up-to-date training.

These issues raise important questions: (1) How can teachers effectively integrate digital tools into teaching the four language skills, given the variation in teaching approaches and experience? (2) How does teachers' cognition influence this process? These developments have generated ongoing research questions and scholarly interest in the field. Since the emergence of CALL, scholars have conducted numerous empirical studies, interviewed teachers and learners, observed lessons, and analyzed instructional practices. However, despite the increasing number of studies published on these topics, a definitive solution has not been reached. One reason is that technology develops rapidly, and successful language learning through technology requires ongoing research and careful analysis.

In spite of the growing number of researches in technology integration in language learning, numerous limitations still exist in current literature. Many articles include information on specific skills in isolation and focus on students' results rather than instructional challenges. Not many studies report about issues teachers encounter within EFL context while integrating technology in four skills-speaking, listening, reading and writing. Skill-specific technological limitations, therefore, classroom realities, skill-based requirements are insufficiently studied. This review article bridges this gap by analyzing a range of diverse studies to provide an incorporated understanding of the pedagogical challenges regarding technology-supported skill development.

The aim of this article is to review and synthesize existing research on the challenges EFL teachers face when integrating technology for the development of speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills. Particular focus is placed on

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pedagogical and cognitive challenges. To guide this review, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What pedagogical challenges do teachers and students face when technological tools are used in language classes?
2. How do teachers' prior knowledge and beliefs influence their use of digital tools?
3. What problems are encountered when using technology to teach speaking, writing, listening, and reading?

Methodology of the Review

This article adopts a narrative review approach that aims at synthesizing existing research materials on technology integration in EFL skill development. Academic databases such as Google scholar, ERIC, and ResearchGate were used to study relevant articles through following keywords: technology integration, language learning through digital tools, developing language skills through technology, challenges of technology in language learning, benefits of technology in language learning, the role of digital tools during COVID-19.

The review article focuses on peer-reviewed articles, book chapters in the field of applied linguistics and language pedagogy. Articles were selected according to their relevance to (a) technology integration in teaching four skills, (b) pedagogical challenges encountered by both instructors and learners in EFL contexts. Along with review articles, articles with empirical evidence as well were included to ensure comprehensive coverage of theoretical and classroom-based findings.

Rather than providing statistical analysis, this paper synthesizes patterns, pedagogical implications, and challenges across various studies. The purpose is to identify common themes related to technology-supported skill development and to highlight areas where instructional practice and research require further research.

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Literature Review

Technology in language teaching

Technology plays an important role in everyday life, influencing work, and communication, teaching and learning practices. Learning languages has become mostly accessible across age groups with the help of digital tools. In addition, digital media facilitate exposure to informal language use, ranging from adult learners preparing to travel and to young children interested in multimedia content. As a result, people no longer have to search for books and dictionaries for a long time but can simply use digital tools.

In terms of students studying at schools and universities, ministries of education are equipping classrooms with the necessary technological tools to meet modern standards (Manzoor, Jamil, & Nawaz, 2024). This shift corresponds with students' preference for more digitally supported educational environments rather than print-based instruction. Within this environment, technology integration into the language learning process has encouraged cooperation and also helped hesitant students take initiative (Zhang, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends not only on the existence of technological advancements but on teachers' positive attitude as well (Amini and Salehi, 2024). These findings indicate that the availability of digital devices in education does not guarantee success since teachers' perception and their attitude towards this infrastructure matters much.

Technology is not a new or unfamiliar concept in education; rather, it has a long history of development. This history dates back to the 1980s, when computers were mainly used for drilling and repetition with little or no interaction. Over time, technology use evolved from simple exercise practice to more interactive activities and eventually to communication and collaboration with peers. Tape language laboratories, recorders, and videos had already been in use since the 1960s and 1970s (Amini & Salehi, 2022).

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Compared to earlier periods, research shows that the variety of multimedia used in language learning has expanded. Commonly used digital devices nowadays include computers, mobile devices, PowerPoint slides, audio players and games, all of which support interactive language learning (Zhang and Zou, 2022). In addition, except classroom-based tools technology-enhanced language learning includes online learning, distance learning, Internet resources, and Web 2.0 tools (Sildon, 2025). Together these developments indicate a transformation from isolated technological aids to digital integrated systems that can assist in reshaping the language instruction and its delivery.

Mishra and Koehler (2006) reported that technology was initially developed for business and professional purposes rather than for education or language learning. This was largely true, as platforms specifically designed for educational purposes were limited at that time. However, over time, an increasing number of educational technology-based resources have been developed, and platforms such as Canvas, Moodle, Padlet, Kahoot, and AI-powered tools now enable teachers and learners to engage in language acquisition more interactively.

Warschauer and Healey (1998) made predictions about the future of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) over the following decades. They anticipated that technology, multimedia, and networked communication would become central to language acquisition. They also predicted that teachers would take on a more supportive role in the classroom, students and teachers would use email and blogs for communication, and learners would develop greater autonomy. In the past, before the integration of technology in language learning, teachers were central in classrooms and led the process, while students were less engaged in communication and did not play an active role. The emergence of technology enabled students to become active participants, and they gradually became more immersed in the learning process.

These predictions were partly accurate; however, their realization has not been universal. For many years, the use of technology in language education remained

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optional rather than fully integrated into teaching practices. Moreover, technology did not always encourage authentic interaction and meaningful communication as predicted by scholars (Beatty, 2013). Although the predictions were not completely realized within a 30-year period, by 2025 most teachers have become literate in using technology, have developed skills in using digital devices during classes, and have demonstrated positive psychological adaptation (Zou & Song, 2025).

Even though technology has surrounded the field of education and offered many opportunities, many teachers still followed traditional methods and were not required to use technology until the coronavirus pandemic. The outbreak of this disease forced people into isolation. During the pandemic, education suffered because it was not prepared for online education with ready-made curricula and sufficient resources. Despite this, teachers were required to adapt and continued lessons online worldwide.

Although this caused inconveniences, it urged both students and teachers to improve their digital literacy, accelerated the integration process, and enabled teachers to experience a new mode of delivery (Özdemir, Sağlam, & Erkir, 2024). Students attended classes via Zoom and submitted assignments through Google Classroom and other platforms. This, in turn, highly motivated students as these platforms became learning media (Silalahi et al., 2022). Furthermore, distance learning supported many teachers and students because it was time-saving and cost-effective (Sildon, 2025; Beishuizen, 2008; Hass & Joseph, 2018). Taken together pandemic served as a new opportunity for both teachers and students to increase digital literacy rates, and the existence of platforms engaged students' participation.

Technology also poses numerous disadvantages despite its widespread availability. Its effectiveness remains an issue. Manzoor, Jamil, and Nawaz (2024) reported that respondents supported technology-integrated lessons

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because they improved all four skills, built language proficiency, and boosted independence.

However, disadvantages included differences in the technologies teachers used, which caused complexity and unfamiliarity; lack of access to digital tools; rapid technological development; and the need for continuous training. Privacy concerns were also mentioned since users needed to provide personal data when logging in (Mauliska et al., 2024 & Nasution and Batubara, 2024). Mishra and Koehler (2006) further noted that training teachers to use specific software can make their knowledge too narrow and quickly outdated, as technology changes rapidly. These findings highlight the negative effects of technology in education and the need to raise awareness while using.

When technology is directly linked to language learning, even if it motivates students and teachers, enhance engagement, and increases digital literacy, its effectiveness must still be questioned. Does it help learners acquire languages effectively? Technology should support principles of language acquisition and should not be used only because it is available, and criteria for its evaluation was proposed, including whether it encourages language development, matches students' levels, promotes meaningful communication, reflects real-world use, and whether time and training demands are realistic (Chapelle, 2001). Technology was considered useful if it was pedagogically grounded (Golonka et al., 2014). However, these expectations from CALL are too high as people fear that computers might replace teachers one day (Bax, 2003). These articles highlight the importance of pedagogical principles, and digital tools should support the learning process, but not lead the process instead of teachers.

Overall, technology plays an important role in language learning. Teachers now use Internet and educational platforms to teach speaking, listening, writing, and reading. While information and materials are easily accessible, engaging activities based on games and authentic language use are incorporated into lessons. To select appropriate materials that support real language acquisition,

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teachers are expected to continually develop their own skills and receive training. Otherwise, technology may become ineffective and waste the time of both teachers and students.

Technology and the Four Language Skills

While discussing technology integration in language learning, another term that emerges is **ICT (Information and Communication Technology)**. ICT is the practical implementation of technologies in education, and it includes videos, PowerPoint presentations, Word documents, multimedia materials, and online platforms. In Uzbekistan, many institutions, schools, and language learning centers have already equipped classrooms with smart boards, replacing whiteboards and TVs with one versatile tool. The smart board serves as a simple whiteboard or blackboard, a TV, a speaker, and is even connected to the internet. All of these tools, along with many others not mentioned in this list, are used by teachers and learners for language learning. However, these tools are used for different purposes, such as learning new words using a Word document or watching videos to improve speaking or pronunciation. With the emergence of ICT, classes have changed from a teacher-centered approach to a student-centered one (Sabiri, 2020). The question is how these tools assist learners and teachers.

Regarding reading, this skill involves vocabulary, text comprehension, and reading fluency. While reading a text, learners improve their global knowledge and boost their emotions. To understand the text and its meaning, learners should have a rich vocabulary. With the integration of ICT, reading has become more interactive and enjoyable, as well as more accessible than traditional paper-based methods. Technological advancements have enabled students to read texts on screens; in addition, they can access immediate lexical support by clicking on a word in the text to see its translation in their own language. For instance, READLANG, LINGQ, and BETTERLINGO are platforms that enable students

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to learn new words while reading; these platforms can even create flashcards with words from the text.

Joseph and Khan (2020) conducted a survey and reported that PowerPoint presentations and visual aids help learners increase their lexical resources and comprehension. Learning platforms such as Lexia Core5 and Cloze improve students' reading skills since they provide instant feedback, track progress, and enhance both motivation and engagement (Darus & Abdul Aziz, 2025). These correspond with findings of the research conducted by Noori (2025) where students taught with digital tools showed greater comprehension compared to students in the traditional reading group. Acquisition of vocabulary was also higher in the digital group. Beatty (2013) reported that reading comprehension developed with multimedia, but cognitive overload could have a detrimental effect. However, such cognitive demands may help expand students' educational backgrounds and boost vocabulary size, whether passive or active. There are other challenges as well. Students who over-rely on reading on digital platforms may become addicted to skimming and scanning at the expense of deep comprehension (Noori, 2025). Moreover, overusing digital tools can negatively affect attention span, as students quickly feel boredom when reading longer texts. it found that students who used digital tools Despite these benefits, challenges such as slow internet connections and difficulties navigating e-books were observed. Taken together, despite having numerous challenges, digital tools assist reading process and help to develop this skill.

As for writing, this is one of the skills that is particularly challenging for students. This is due to the fact that writing requires rich background knowledge, lexical resources, the ability to structure ideas, and patience. It takes a long time to master writing, organize ideas, and practice grammar and punctuation. Using technology in teaching writing is not just about making it digital, but also about the ways of teaching and learning and how it facilitates progress. Joseph and Khan (2020) listed tools such as smartphones and tablets that help motivate students and

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encourage cooperation in improving writing skills. In addition, digital tools and online platforms provide instant feedback, opportunities for vocabulary improvement, and greater student independence. However, all these benefits may have drawbacks as well; for example, students may become overly reliant on auto-correction and use their imagination less, since ideas can be easily generated or found. One of the online platforms that is widespread among learners and teachers is Grammarly, which automatically underlines grammatical or spelling mistakes and helps users notice and correct errors. Sildon (2025) conducted a review and found that, thanks to technology integration, students improved their writing skills because it helped generate ideas, boost confidence, and develop strategies. If earlier students needed teachers' support extensively and waited for teachers' responses to check drafts or correct errors, nowadays students can tackle these issues individually and submit work much faster for assessment. This saves time and encourages students not to give up or get stuck at certain points. Both articles support the existence of digital devices and the findings prove that writing skills develop significantly with technological assistance.

However, according to Ahmad (2021) and Beatty (2013) teachers reported that the majority of students were simply copying and pasting their work from Google during online classes and that led to the quality of feedback or assessment. This indicates that some students misused the internet for their own purposes and were engaged in academic dishonesty.Despite these challenges, the number of benefits outweighs the drawbacks, and without technology, progressing in writing skills is difficult in the modern world.

Speaking is regarded as a fundamental component of the language. Before the emergence of technology, speaking was the skill that was least practiced, since teachers played a primary role and their talking time exceeded that of students. Students began practicing speaking more with the help of ICT; by cooperating with peers, they improved communication skills much faster. Moreover, technology assists in improving articulation and accuracy (Maran & Hashim,

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2022). Since technology requires literacy to use effectively and proper methods for integration, teachers need to practice different approaches. While using videos or cartoons with subtitles, students try to imitate pronunciation, intonation, and even manners. Digital storytelling is a particularly significant task in technology-enhanced lessons, where images, graphic designs, and texts make the process creative (Sosas, 2021). Both writers highlight the positive sides of digital devices in the development of speaking skills using media and audio-lingual tasks.

The research conducted by Sosas (2021) revealed that teachers no longer rely solely on traditional methods in speaking lessons and integrate ICT tools—such as videoconferencing, social media conversations, and e-mails—during classes. The incorporation of these tools helps learners overcome difficulties with language barriers and boosts confidence. However, Ruben et al. (2021) report that overreliance on digital tools at the expense of face-to-face communication can negatively affect nonverbal decoding skills. This claim may be overstated, since digital tools can even connect learners via videoconferencing, where face-to-face communication is possible. Online video platforms provide authentic audiovisual input and ready-made episodes that show real-life situations to students, including emotions and nonverbal signs.

In terms of listening, it is also considered one of the most stressful skills because different accents, speed, and scarcity of lexical resources used by native speakers make students feel anxious and weaken their confidence. For this reason, incorporating multimedia (videos, films, podcasts) is a useful option to address issues related to this skill. In one vocational college, an experiment was conducted by Negara and Jamilah (2024) to observe ICT tools and their integration in listening. In the pre-listening stage, students predicted the content and revised vocabulary prepared in Canvas. During the main stage, students watched videos and read subtitles, then answered questions using ESLVideo.com quizzes. Finally, in the post-listening stage, they discussed questions on Google Docs. Results revealed that before the integration of ICT, students' listening

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performance was low; they complained about the speed of the audio, did not understand many words, and felt nervous. However, after the experiment, students' performance improved.

The pre-listening stage helped students revise vocabulary, watch the video, and become familiar with the subtitles. Their level of anxiety decreased as well. Narni (2025) similarly reports that the three-stage approach (pre-stage, while-stage, post-stage) helps students prepare for upcoming listening tasks. First, students are introduced to new words; then they listen or watch the audio, complete tasks, and discuss. Moreover, listening with multimedia provides authentic input, improves comprehension, and raises cultural awareness. In retrospect, Beatty (2013) also highlighted the advantages of technology in listening by emphasizing the richness of multimedia. However, one disadvantage was noted: students' overexposure to an unlimited number of resources and the absence of precise objectives. Here, the teacher's role as a facilitator is essential to assist students in choosing appropriate materials and setting clear aims.

Discussion

The findings analyzed in this article indicate that technology integrated in EFL instruction is neither inherently effective nor inherently problematic. Its effectiveness depends on teachers' readiness, their expertise, students' participation, and balanced reliance. Technology, ICT, and CALL are all essential components of language learning, and their integration into the process is necessary to meet the needs of students, the curriculum, and the modern world.

This review aims to contribute to the existing literature by integrating findings including speaking, writing, reading and listening skills rather than analyzing in isolation. Despite its advantages, technology also presents disadvantages. Along with mentioning challenges across skills while incorporating technology, the article provides information about technology's participation in reshaping EFL instructions at different levels.

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From practical viewpoint, technology integration requires proper guidance, control over devices and continuous teacher trainings. Educational institutions, therefore, need to focus on professional development programs and assist teachers to align digital tools to lesson objectives.

In the future more empirical researcher on specific contexts and on different types of learning such as online, hybrid, face-to-face should be done. In addition, long-term students' outcomes linked to technology-supported education should be investigated.

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