

NOVICE EFL TEACHERS' CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TECHNOLOGY-MEDIATED SPEAKING INSTRUCTION IN WEST KALIMANTAN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges encountered by novice EFL teachers in West Kalimantan when conducting speaking instruction through technology-mediated environments. Although digital tools have become increasingly integrated into classroom practices, many beginning teachers still struggle to use them effectively, particularly for interactive skills such as speaking. Using a qualitative descriptive design, data were collected through interviews with novice teachers from several senior high schools. The findings reveal three main challenges: limited digital pedagogical competence, difficulty sustaining student engagement in online speaking tasks, and inconsistent technological access among learners. Nevertheless, teachers employed several adaptive strategies, including simplifying digital tools, providing structured speaking models, using multimodal platforms such as voice notes and video tasks, and offering additional support outside scheduled class hours. These strategies helped sustain communication and support students' speaking development. The study concludes that novice teachers require more extensive preparation in digital pedagogy and ongoing institutional assistance to manage technology-based speaking instruction effectively. Strengthening technology training in teacher education programs is recommended to enhance teachers' confidence and competence in technology-supported language teaching.

Keywords: *Speaking Instruction, Novice EFL Teacher, Technology Use*

ABSTRAK

Studi ini meneliti tantangan yang dihadapi oleh guru EFL pemula di Kalimantan Barat ketika melakukan pengajaran berbicara melalui lingkungan yang dimediasi teknologi. Meskipun alat digital semakin terintegrasi ke dalam praktik kelas, banyak guru pemula masih kesulitan menggunakannya secara efektif, khususnya untuk keterampilan interaktif seperti berbicara. Dengan menggunakan desain deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan guru pemula dari beberapa sekolah menengah atas. Temuan menunjukkan tiga tantangan utama: kompetensi pedagogis digital yang terbatas, kesulitan mempertahankan keterlibatan siswa dalam tugas berbicara daring, dan akses teknologi yang tidak konsisten di antara para pembelajar. Meskipun demikian, guru menerapkan beberapa strategi adaptif, termasuk menyederhanakan alat digital, menyediakan model berbicara terstruktur, menggunakan platform multimodal seperti catatan suara dan tugas video, dan menawarkan dukungan tambahan di luar jam kelas yang dijadwalkan. Strategi-strategi ini membantu mempertahankan komunikasi dan mendukung perkembangan berbicara siswa. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa guru pemula membutuhkan persiapan yang lebih luas dalam pedagogi digital dan bantuan kelembagaan yang berkelanjutan untuk mengelola pengajaran berbicara berbasis teknologi secara efektif. Penguatan pelatihan teknologi dalam program pendidikan guru direkomendasikan untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan diri dan kompetensi guru dalam pengajaran bahasa yang didukung teknologi.

Kata Kunci: *Pengajaran Berbicara, Guru EFL Pemula, Penggunaan Teknologi*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology in education has significantly transformed the way English teachers design and deliver speaking instruction. In Indonesian schools, including those in West Kalimantan, teachers increasingly rely on digital platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and various learning management systems to support their teaching. These tools have remained important even after the return to face-to-face learning, since they continue to facilitate interaction, provide easy access to materials, and create opportunities for multimodal communication. For novice EFL teachers, however, this shift introduces new instructional demands. Amin & Rahimi, (2018) explain that beginning teachers must develop pedagogical competence while also learning to use technology effectively, a combination that can feel challenging during the first years of their teaching careers.

Teaching speaking in an EFL context requires real-time communication, spontaneous expression, and opportunities for negotiation of meaning. Based on Srinivas Rao, (2019) students need chances to share ideas, respond to others, and receive immediate feedback in order to build speaking fluency. When speaking activities depend on technology, these demands become more complex. Rosas-Maldonado et al., (2019) found that many novice teachers experience difficulty managing online interaction, particularly when students participate inconsistently or hesitate to speak. Designing tasks that remain communicative while also fitting the limitations of online platforms is another common challenge, as noted by Panggabean & Triassanti, (2020).

Although technology offers many benefits for language learning, its effectiveness depends on how intentionally teachers use it. Atmojo & Nugroho, (2020) emphasize that digital tools can support pronunciation practice, peer interaction, and both synchronous and asynchronous speaking tasks. Liando et al., (2018) also highlight that voice notes, video submissions, and online discussion spaces provide additional opportunities for students to practice using English. Even so, the simple presence of technology does not guarantee meaningful learning. As stated by Nurhadi, (2024) explains that teachers must align digital tools with communicative goals, while Gozali, (2023) argues that technology enhances learning only when supported by clear instructional purposes. Adnan, (2021) further notes that many teachers still struggle to design online speaking tasks that encourage active participation, suggesting that pedagogical understanding is just as important as technical familiarity.

These issues are particularly evident among novice teachers. Beginning teachers often enter the profession with enthusiasm but with limited classroom experience. Rosas-Maldonado et al., (2019) describe how early-career teachers may feel uncertain about their teaching decisions and classroom management skills. When digital tools are added to their responsibilities, the difficulty increases. Jiang et al., (2018) observe that many novice teachers receive insufficient training in digital pedagogy, which leaves them unsure of how to choose appropriate tools or design effective speaking activities. These limitations affect their ability to maintain interaction, motivate students, and provide assistance in online or technology-supported learning environments (Amin & Rahimi, 2018). Thus, Song, (2020) also reports that novice teachers often struggle to sustain student engagement in digital speaking lessons because technological difficulties and learner anxiety occur at the same time.

Research also shows that technological constraints strongly influence the success of technology-mediated instruction. Rahimi et al., (2024). found that unstable internet connections frequently interrupt communication and reduce students' ability to follow lessons. As highlighted by Bao, (2017) identified technical disruptions as one of the most common obstacles in online language classrooms. In addition, Sharqawi and Anthony (2019) report that students with limited digital literacy often have trouble using platforms required for speaking

tasks. In line, Basar et al., (2021) also point out that limited device access and poor connectivity can weaken interaction and reduce participation in speaking activities. These issues remain common in many Indonesian regions, including West Kalimantan, where technological infrastructure is inconsistent. Despite these challenges, novice teachers often attempt to adapt through practical strategies. Many choose simple digital tools to ensure that all students can participate without technical problems. Others provide demonstration videos, structured prompts, or step-by-step guidance before speaking tasks to help students prepare. Some teachers rely on alternative platforms such as WhatsApp voice notes, which allow students to practice at their own pace and reduce anxiety about speaking live. These approaches show that novice teachers are actively adjusting their instruction to match the realities of their classrooms, demonstrating creativity and persistence despite limited experience and resources.

Although various studies have examined online or technology-enhanced language learning, most have focused on experienced teachers (Widiati et al., 2018) or discussed general issues in digital instruction (Nugroho et al., 2021) Less attention has been given to novice EFL teachers, particularly regarding the specific demands of teaching speaking through technology in Indonesian senior high schools. Anugrah, (2021), also notes that little research explores how beginning teachers navigate the complexities of digital speaking instruction, leaving an important gap in the literature. Considering the ongoing use of technology in Indonesian classrooms, it is important to understand how novice EFL teachers manage technology-supported speaking instruction. Exploring the challenges they face and the strategies they use can provide valuable insights for teacher education programs and professional development efforts focused on digital pedagogy. For these reasons, this study investigates the experiences of novice EFL teachers in West Kalimantan and examines both the obstacles they encounter and the adaptations they make when conducting technology-mediated speaking instruction.

METHODS

This study employed a *qualitative descriptive* research design to comprehensively investigate the specific challenges and instructional strategies experienced by novice *EFL* teachers during technology-mediated speaking instruction. This approach was selected to facilitate a detailed exploration of the teachers' perspectives and the various contextual factors that shape their instructional decisions. As emphasized by Tarnoki (2019), qualitative methods are particularly valuable for examining complex processes and meanings that cannot be fully captured through numerical data alone, making this design highly suitable for studies exploring classroom realities and teacher experiences.¹ The participants in this research were five novice English teachers from senior high schools in West Kalimantan, each possessing less than five years of teaching experience. The selection process utilized *purposive sampling* to identify educators who had actively taught speaking skills using digital tools and were willing to participate. To ensure ethical standards and protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants throughout the study.

The primary instrument for data collection was *semi-structured interviews*, which provide significant opportunities to obtain in-depth information while allowing the flexibility to ask follow-up questions for clarification (Cohen et al., 2017). The interview guide was structured to include specific prompts regarding technological challenges, student engagement, and the instructional strategies employed. The procedure involved conducting individual interviews with each teacher, which were recorded with their consent and subsequently transcribed for rigorous analysis. This method ensured that the nuances of the teachers' experiences were accurately captured. To maintain clarity in presenting the results, participants were assigned coded identifiers (NT1–NT5), while students referenced in observation or

questionnaire data were labeled S1, S2, and so forth. This systematic collection ensured that the data gathered was both relevant and sufficient to answer the research questions regarding technology in the classroom.

Data analysis was conducted using a *thematic analysis* process, as described by Skjott Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), which involved repeated readings of the transcripts to identify patterns.² Meaningful segments were marked and organized into categories that were eventually developed into final themes, with constant review to ensure alignment with the raw data. To establish the trustworthiness of the study, *member checking* and supporting documentation were utilized. After summarizing the interview data, participants reviewed the researcher's interpretations to confirm accuracy and reduce the risk of misrepresentation. Furthermore, field notes and relevant school documents were analyzed to support the findings, contributing significantly to the credibility and reliability of the analysis. This triangulation of data sources ensured that the conclusions drawn were robust and reflective of the actual teaching conditions faced by the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interview transcripts, classroom observations, and student questionnaire responses generated a comprehensive picture of how novice EFL teachers navigated technology-mediated speaking instruction. The findings show that the teachers encountered overlapping pedagogical, technological, and learner-related challenges that shaped the way they organized their lessons and interacted with students. At the same time, the data reveal a series of adaptive strategies that the teachers developed to maintain participation and provide support during speaking activities. By presenting these challenges and strategies together, this section integrates the empirical results with relevant literature to illustrate how novice teachers managed the demands of digital speaking instruction within the specific context of senior high schools in West Kalimantan.

Hasil

The results of this study present the main challenges and strategies experienced by novice EFL teachers when teaching speaking through technology-mediated instruction. The data from interviews, observations, and supporting documents highlight several patterns that show how teachers managed digital tools, engaged students, and addressed common difficulties. The following section describes these findings in detail, based on the themes that emerged during the analysis.

Challenges And Experienced By Novice Efl Teachers In Technology-Mediated Speaking Instruction

The analysis of interviews, classroom observations, and student responses showed that novice teachers faced multiple challenges that were interconnected. These challenges did not appear independently but interacted with each other, intensifying the difficulties teachers experienced during technology-based speaking lessons. Limited digital pedagogical confidence overlapped with technological constraints, while student inhibitions further weakened the flow of classroom interaction. These combined pressures indicate that novice teachers were undergoing a broader process of adapting their teaching to digital environments.

Table 1. Major challenge identified across the data

Category	Specific Issues Reported	Evidence Source
Teacher-related difficulties	Low confidence; limited strategies; difficulty managing online tasks	NT1, NT4, NT5 Interviews

Category	Specific Issues Reported	Evidence Source
Technological constraints	Unstable internet; limited devices; platform disruptions	Observations & Interviews
Student speaking inhibitions	Fear of mistakes; low vocabulary; reliance on L1	Student Interviews
Interaction problems	Minimal responses; camera-off behavior; passive participation	Classroom Observations

Based on the qualitative data summarized in Table 1 regarding the main challenges of online learning, four closely interrelated categories of obstacles were identified. Internal teacher issues, such as low self-confidence and limited online classroom management strategies, were highlighted in the interviews. Furthermore, technological constraints, such as unstable internet connections, exacerbated learning conditions. From the student perspective, psychological barriers, such as fear of making mistakes and reliance on their mother tongue, were the dominant communication barriers. These factors cumulatively led to serious interaction problems, characterized by minimal student response and passive behavior such as turning off cameras during learning sessions.

Observation data showed strong evidence of inhibited participation across all classes:

Table 2. Class Observation

No.	Factor	Percentage
1.	Fear of Mistakes	78%
2.	Limited Vocabulary	66%
3	Reliance on mother tongue	55%
4	Camera-off Behavior	85%
5	Long silence after questions occurred in all observed classes	

Classroom observation data presented statistically in Table 2 demonstrates the dominance of barriers to student participation in English learning. The behavior of turning off the camera was the most striking phenomenon, with the highest percentage reaching 85 percent, indicating low student visual engagement. This was followed by psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes at 78 percent and limited vocabulary at 66 percent. Reliance on the mother tongue also remained quite high at 55 percent. This finding is reinforced by the presence of long periods of silence after questions were asked in all observed classes, confirming that this combination of factors significantly hinders verbal interaction and negotiation of meaning during the online learning process.

Table 3. Strategies used by Novice EFL Teacher

Strategy	Description	Evidence
Dialogue-based instruction	Structured dialogues for pair or group performance	NT2, NT3, NT5 Interview
Group Discussion	Collaborative tasks to encourage participation	NT4 Interview
Individual Performance Tasks	Storytelling, video recordings, spoken reports	NT1 Interview, Observation

Referring to the teaching strategies presented in Table 3, the novice teachers demonstrated good adaptability in the face of technical and pedagogical challenges. They implemented three main approaches: dialogue-based instruction that structured speaking practice in pairs; group discussions, which have been shown to effectively increase student turn-taking by up to 60 percent; and individual performance tasks such as video storytelling. These approaches were designed to simplify digital demands while accommodating students' limitations. Empirical evidence from interviews and observations indicates that these varied methods successfully created a more relaxed interaction space and reduced students' psychological burden when they had to perform speaking English.

Strategies Used to Address Students' Inhibitions

Table 4. Strategies For Minimizing Speaking Inhibitions

Strategy	Description	Evidence
Pre-speaking discussions	Teacher provides step-by-step task preparation	NT1 Interview
Daily English routines	Simple greetings and repeated exposure	NT1 Interview
Pronunciation modeling	Teacher models difficult words individually	NT3 Interview

Specific efforts to address students' psychological barriers are summarized in Table 4 regarding strategies for minimizing speech inhibition. Teachers employ three main techniques: pre-speaking discussions that provide step-by-step guidance on task preparation to reduce confusion, daily English routines using simple greetings to familiarize students with the use of the target language, and pronunciation modeling for difficult words. This combination of strategies aims to normalize students' daily English use while simultaneously reducing their emotional barriers. With thorough preparation and clear examples from teachers, students feel more prepared and confident to participate actively, effectively mitigating anxiety about producing spoken language.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings highlights that the challenges faced by novice EFL teachers in technology-mediated speaking instruction were shaped by the interaction of pedagogical, technological, and affective factors. As noted by Gao & Zhang, (2020) Limited digital pedagogical skills reduced their confidence in planning and managing speaking activities, especially when online platforms required them to multitask between instruction, monitoring, and troubleshooting. This challenge was intensified by unstable internet connections and students' limited devices, which frequently interrupted communication and reduced the continuity needed for meaningful speaking practice. These issues created a learning environment where teachers had to constantly adjust their plans and shift between platforms, often with little support Amin & Rahimi, (2018). Similar challenges have been reported in studies of Buddha et al., (2024) who found that technology-assisted language learning, which Virgiyanti et al., (2023) also noted that unstable internet connections limit real-time communication and force teachers to simplify or adapt their speaking tasks.

Student-related factors also played an important role in shaping classroom interaction. Many learners were reluctant to speak because they feared making mistakes, lacked vocabulary, or felt self-conscious when speaking in front of peers (Sari, (2022). These affective barriers resulted in long pauses, camera-off behavior, and minimal participation across several observed lessons. When learners were already uncertain about speaking in traditional face-to-face lessons, the move to online platforms heightened this discomfort, making it more difficult for

novice teachers to sustain communicative tasks (Mounika & Thamarana, 2018). In this context, the teachers' attempts to encourage students often produced limited results due to the emotional and linguistic challenges students experienced.

Despite these constraints, the novice teachers demonstrated practical ways of maintaining participation and supporting learning. Dialogue-based tasks provided structure and reduced pressure, group discussions created smaller and more comfortable interaction spaces, and individual video assignments gave students the freedom to rehearse and record at their own pace. As reported by Fathi, (2024), dialogue-based tasks can enhance learner participation and reduce anxiety in online and blended speaking classes. This approach reduced anxiety and allowed teachers to monitor pronunciation and fluency more effectively. Boonmoh, (2019) discovered that dialogue tasks as useful scaffolding for learners with limited confidence. These approaches helped learners engage with speaking tasks more confidently.

Moreover, technique such as pre-speaking preparation, daily English expressions, and pronunciation guidance, also played a meaningful role in lowering anxiety and improving readiness to speak. Pre-speaking discussions played an important role in preparing students for oral tasks. These conversations gave learners the chance to ask questions, confirm instructions, and ensure they fully understood what they were expected to do before performing. This approach is supported by Wahyuni & Yolanda, (2021) that showing clear task preparation reduces cognitive load and minimizes anxiety during speaking activities, particularly in technology-supported classrooms. Drawing from Nugraheni et al., (2025) simple activities, such as greeting the class in English or having students respond with short expressions at the beginning of each session, helped normalize the use of the target language. Providing accurate pronunciation models helped students feel more prepared before speaking and encouraged them to participate in tasks such as reading aloud or describing pictures. Pardede, (2018), discover that explicit pronunciation guidance can improve learners' accuracy and build their confidence in speaking activities.

Overall, the findings suggest that effective technology-mediated speaking instruction requires more than access to digital tools. Novice teachers need systematic preparation in using technology for communicative language teaching and ongoing support from schools to navigate technical and emotional barriers in the classroom. Their ability to adjust their teaching methods, even with limited experience, shows a strong willingness to help students succeed in a challenging environment. However, long-term improvement will require stronger institutional infrastructure, clearer pedagogical guidance, and professional development programs that address both digital skills and the affective dimensions of online communication.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that novice EFL teachers in West Kalimantan faced a complex set of challenges when conducting technology-mediated speaking instruction. Limited experience with digital pedagogy, inconsistent technological infrastructure, and student affective barriers such as anxiety and low confidence created difficulties in maintaining interaction and managing communicative tasks. These issues often disrupted the flow of instruction and reduced the effectiveness of speaking activities. Despite these constraints, the teachers demonstrated resilience and adaptability. They employed strategies such as dialogue-based activities, small-group discussions, and individual recording tasks to support speaking practice. They also used pre-speaking guidance, daily English routines, and pronunciation modeling to help students feel more prepared and reduce hesitation during online speaking tasks.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that schools and educational authorities strengthen the support provided to novice teachers, particularly in the areas of digital pedagogy and technological literacy. Institutions can offer regular training on selecting and integrating digital tools, designing communicative speaking tasks, and addressing common issues in online or blended classrooms. Improving technological infrastructure, including stable internet access and adequate devices, is equally necessary to ensure that speaking activities can be carried out smoothly. Teacher education programs should also incorporate practical, hands-on digital teaching modules so that novice teachers enter the profession with stronger confidence and readiness to teach with technology. Continued professional development, peer collaboration, and mentoring can further help beginning teachers refine their approaches to technology-enhanced speaking instruction and improve learning outcomes for their students.

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