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TEACHING SPEAKING TO CHILDREN WITH THE HELP OF TECHNOLOGY

Forhodova Aziza,
student of Uzbekistan State World Languages
University, Tashkent

Abstract. The ability to communicate effectively is fundamental to a child's development and future success. For children with speech and language difficulties, technology has emerged as a powerful tool to support and enhance traditional speech therapy practices. From interactive apps to augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices, technology offers engaging and personalized learning experiences that can foster speech development and empower children to express themselves with confidence.

Keywords. Technology, speaking skills, engagement and motivation, support, concentration, comprehensio, negotiation, feedback and reflection

Benefits of Technology in Speech Therapy:

Technology offers several advantages in teaching speaking skills to children:

Engagement and Motivation: Interactive apps, games, and virtual environments capture children's attention and make learning fun, leading to increased motivation and participation in therapy sessions.

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Personalized Learning: Technology allows therapists to tailor activities to each child's specific needs and learning style. Apps and software can be adjusted for difficulty levels, reinforcement schedules, and target skills.

Visual and Auditory Support: Many technological tools incorporate visual aids, auditory feedback, and multimedia elements that can enhance comprehension and reinforce learning for children with different learning styles.

Accessibility and Convenience: Technology makes therapy more accessible for families by providing tools and resources that can be used at home, in school, or on the go.

Data Tracking and Progress Monitoring: Many apps and software programs offer data tracking features that allow therapists and parents to monitor progress, identify areas of improvement, and adjust therapy plans accordingly.

Examples of Technology Used in Speech Therapy:

Articulation and Phonology Apps: Numerous apps target specific speech sounds, providing interactive exercises and games that help children practice correct pronunciation and production of sounds. Examples include Articulation Station, Speech Blubs, and Splingo's Language Universe.

Language Development Apps: These apps focus on building vocabulary, grammar skills, and comprehension through interactive stories, games, and activities. Examples include Language Therapy for Children, Speakaboos, and TinyTap.

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Devices: AAC devices provide alternative ways for children with complex communication needs to express themselves. These can range from simple picture-based systems to sophisticated speech-generating devices. Popular examples include Proloquo2Go, TouchChat, and LAMP Words for Life.

Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR): Immersive VR and AR technologies can create engaging and realistic scenarios for children to practice social communication and language skills in a safe and controlled environment.

Teletherapy Platforms: Online platforms like Zoom or specialized telehealth services allow therapists to deliver therapy remotely, which can be particularly beneficial for families in remote areas or with limited access to specialists.

Considerations and Challenges: While technology offers immense potential, it is crucial to use it thoughtfully and strategically. Considerations include: Screen Time Management: Balance technology use with other activities to ensure a well-rounded learning experience and prevent excessive screen time.

Individualized Approach: Not every technology will be suitable for every child. Therapists should carefully select tools based on individual needs and goals.

Cost and Accessibility: Some technologies can be expensive or require specific devices, limiting accessibility for some families. Exploring low-cost options and advocating for funding resources is crucial.

Training and Support: Therapists and parents may require training to effectively integrate technology into therapy sessions and home practice.

Technology has become an invaluable asset in teaching speaking skills to children with speech and language difficulties. By harnessing the power of engaging apps, AAC devices, and other technological tools, speech-language pathologists can enhance therapy sessions, personalize learning experiences, and empower children to find their voice and communicate effectively. While challenges remain, the continued development and integration of technology in speech therapy holds immense promise for improving communication outcomes and enriching the lives of children with speech and language difficulties.

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