Digital technologies and the oral production development in ELT: Echoing worldwide teacher's voice

Tecnologias digitais e as práticas de desenvolvimento da oralidade em língua inglesa: ecoando a voz de professores em escala global

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ABSTRACT

Oral production development has been overemphasized to be one of the hardest ones, considering the multiple hindrances coming alongside its development (OSBORN et al., 2008). Similarly, there have been some initiatives from worldwide English teachers bringing contextually meaningful solutions to solve such issues (POP et al., 2011; SONG, 2009). One of them has been vowed to be digital technologies, which would work, under a sociocultural perspective, as a potential learning and mediational tool (JOHNSON, 2009). This article, thence, displays an initial research carried out with thirty English teachers coming from thirteen countries. They were given the chance to voice their experiences regarding the use of digital technologies in developing the oral production. Preliminarily results demonstrate teachers' will to make more often the use of digital technologies in the development of the oral production of their students, albeit many of them do not seemingly have the suitable knowledge to properly apply the learning potentialities of such digital tools. The teachers also claim to have already had both positive and negative experiences while making use of these tools, revealing the need to more fitly assist these professionals with more academic and professional support contextually applied to their realities.

Keywords: English language teaching, digital technologies, oral production development, sociocultural theory, teaching practices.

RESUMO

O desenvolvimento da produção oral tem sido enfatizado recentemente como sendo um dos mais difíceis de ocorrer, considerando as múltiplas correlatas barreiras que perpassam seu ensino e aprendizagem (OSBORN et al., 2008). Similarmente, tem havido algumas iniciativas advindas de professores de língua inglesa ao redor do mundo a fim de trazer soluções contextualmente significativas para resolver este complexo tema (POP et al., 2011; SONG, 2009). Uma destas alternativas tem sido as tecnologias digitais, conforme estas têm evoluído constantemente. Este artigo, para tanto, apresenta uma pesquisa inicial desenvolvida com trinta professores de língua inglesa, advindos de treze países. Foi dada a estes a oportunidade para relatarem suas experiências em relação ao uso de tecnologias digitais concernentes ao desenvolvimento da oralidade. Os resultados preliminarmente demonstram o desejo de professores em fazer uso mais frequentemente das tecnologias digitais no desenvolvimento da oralidade, embora muitos deles aparentemente não possuir o conhecimento adequado para apropriadamente utilizarem tais

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ferramentas. Os professores também afirmam já ter tido tanto experiências positivas quanto negativas ao fazerem uso destas ferramentas, revelando a necessidade de se mais adequadamente auxiliar estes profissionais com suporte acadêmico e profissional contextualmente aplicados a suas realidades, conforme muitos deles intuitivamente alegam.

Palavras-Chave: Ensino de língua inglesa, tecnologias digitais, produção oral, práticas de ensino.

1. INTRODUCTION

It is undoubtedly visible the role that the oral production in an additional language[2] plays in nowadays' globalized scenario (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006; GOH & BURNS, 2012), considering the constantly emergent nation barriers shrinkage process that is overtly taking place due to closer business, cultural, academic and financial partnerships among countries and even continents (RIO, 2018a, 2019). The scenario seems to be more vividly experienced while we are going through a global pandemy caused by the COVID-19 (coronavirus). There have been meaningful reports of teachers worldwide while these ones have courageously learned, developed and furthered their teaching profession by means of digital technologies in their teaching practices (ZHONG, 2020).

As human beings, we are tendentially sociable ones, who aim at strengthening such aforementioned partnerships, under a multifaced number of reasons, in order to have benefits from the corresponding exchanges among different language speakers. Our study bases its learning notion under the Sociocultural Theory (hereafter SCT), in which learning is considered as always mediaded by mediational tools (VYGOTSKY, 2005; WERTSCH, 1985). Technology, in its essence, would be another potential tool for the development of the oral production in English (PINHO, 2013). In this global scenario, speaking an additional language such as English might open up a seemingly unending number of windows of opportunities for those who may do it appropriately, as a body of research has been long displaying (BYGATE, 1987; MALASARI, 2017; RIO, 2018b, 2019; PAIVA, 2013). At times, one may see that technology might bring a more protagonist role for pupils to develop their oral production in English. On the other hands, we might sight problems regarding students feeling disoriented or with almost no focus on language learning development, since they might not be ready enough to make use of different digital technologies for language learning.

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[2] Schlatter e Garcez (2012) defend, among other reasons, the use of the term *adittional* instead of *foreign* language, once they understand that languages are usually learnt under a transnational communication perspective. That means that languages are at the service for communication among people from diferent sociocultural contexts and natonalities. Thus, it seems to make no sense the dinstinction between the native and the foreign speaker, once both make use of the same language for communicative purposes. Under the same thought chain, I adopt in this present-day work the term *additional* language.

Additionally, when it comes to the learning or teaching of the oral production in English, what is most likely to occur is a sea of poisoning troubles that affect teachers, students and all the circumscribing ELT professionals (ARAGÃO, 2017). In fact, developing the oral production is a fairly complex task of which every teacher and student should be suitably aware of (SAVASCI, 2013), in order to both minimize the issues concerning this kind of linguistic production as well as to prompt learners and teachers to more suitably work with it.

Some of the solutions that have been commonplace in the development of the oral production regard the use of technology in ELT classes. As it will be shown further, a host of research has displayed both positive as well as negative outcomes stemming either from a suitable or an ineffective use of digital technology in the development of the oral production (PAIVA, 2013; RIO, 2018a, 2018b; RIO, LIMA, 2018). At times, one might see, for instance, learners becoming more autonomous in their learning process, once technology might help pupils become protagonists of their language learning process (PAIVA, 2018). On the other hand, one may also see learners who feel rather disoriented and unfocused on their learning objectives, since they are nor fairly well prepared to work with diversified technological resources (SUNG, 2012). Shedding light into the importance that technology plays in nowadays' world, it is reasonable to understand how such digital tools may be accordingly used in both inside and outside school's ELT lieu.

Therefore, the present-day article is set up with the view to bringing about the responses from thirty English teachers stemming from thirteen countries, who were given the floor to speak about their ELT teaching practices entailing the use of technology for the development of the oral production in English. We have also analyzed their viewpoints about technology throughout their answers under the SCT framework in order to track what indexes these ones have about a sociocultural understanding of technology.

In order to do it, the article is split up in the following way: the first section shows panoramically the oral production and its main assets under a sociocultural perspective (VYGOTSKY, 2005; JOHNSON, 2009), displaying likewise the benefits of the oral production mastery, as well as the troublesome issues regarding its development. The second section will concisely sight the use of technology in nowadays' world, considering its important role in Education and, more specifically, in the development of the oral production in the ELT domain. The third section presents the methodological procedures, displaying the research participants, the online questionnaire applied to the ELT professionals, as well as the analysis of some of their corresponding responses, in order to initially draw preliminary results and new insights from their viewpoints concerning the use of technology in the development of the oral production in English

under a sociocultural perspective. Preliminary considerations are presented in the last section as to further the initial research carried out so far.

Let us head, thence, to the first section, unveiling some relevant assets about the oral production in English.

2. Oral production main characteristics, benefits and challenges in its development

In my history with additional languages learning, I have personally come across many issues when I was learning each different language. Nowadays, as a teacher of additional languages, I may vividly remind myself of the problems I had every time I was to utter a differently organized set of words in front of foreigners, feeling at times paradoxically shy or afraid to make a mistake in front of them. Nevertheless, these experiences have assisted me in shaping suitable ways to help in the teaching process with my current nowadays' students. Similarly, it has aided me to research more about the oral production as a whole and to understand why this just aforementioned set of episodes occur more often than not with almost anyone willing to learn another language (MALASARI, 2017; RIO, PASIN, DELGADO, 2016; RIO, 2017, 2019).

Unsurprisingly, the academic literature arguably presents various definitions for the speaking skill, which in this article I adopt the term oral production. At times, it is said to be just a meaningless sound production made out from air particles managed by one's articulatory system (BYGATE, 1987; RIO, 2017). On the other hand, some authors will elicit in-depth diversified entangling factors in development of the oral production (HARMER, 2007; BROWN & LEE, 2015), demonstrating that the way one sees a given research object will likely bring one to venture into different ways to understand it.

Another body of research though presents the oral production as a multiple conjunction of diversified characteristics or subskills that altogether constitute the oral production per se. For instance, Harmer (2007) points out that the speaking skill [3]entangles the online linguistic production, that is to say, the oral skill tendentially happens in locus (as nowadays' world may enable one to more lengthily voice one's message by means of digital technologies). It should be fairly noticed, though, that, unlike the writing production, the speaking one is considerably restrained under a limited time gap as for the linguistic production to take place. Rio (2017, 2018a) emphasizes that the oral production is made up by the ability to connect a swift thought organization, proper words' pronunciation, fitly organized discursive

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[3] I will be using during the article the term *speaking skill* whenever the mentioned author uses this term. Under a sociocultural perspective, the speaking skill is termed as *oral production* (JOHNSON, 2009), since this one entails more than a mere subset of skills (this difference is be better explained throughout the article).

assets alongside contextually appropriate speaking interaction with corresponding interlocutors. Brown and Lee (2015) mention that properly fluent language speakers are usually able to adapt their message to specific groups in order to maximize one's effectiveness in the intended utterance as well as being able to make use of self-correction with the view to achieving communicative goals in a multirange of conversational situations (IMAN, 2014).

Yet, it may be fitly mentioned the *benefits* that one may have from the appropriate use of such a socially overvalued skill in the contemporary world . It is no wonder, for instance, that most of the English language teaching courses across the world overtly seem to emphasize the oral production as the most important one to be mastered and worked throughout their classes. The question *"Do you speak _____ language?"* is apparently the one that permeates the socially constructed understanding that the oral production conventionally represents the most important aspect in a language related to the other main three ones (listening, writing and reading). Moreover, such aforementioned question depicts the hidden knowledge that, once someone is able to speak a given language, this person would be commonly seen as capable of making use of the other skills in the same manner (ARIFIN, 2017; ARAGÃO, 2017). Other benefits have been reported such as better relationships with people from other countries due to a broader understanding of their cultural aspects (PENUEL, WERTSCH, 1995). Benefits are also seen in mental health, considering that learning an additional language may help in one's cognitive development and the prevention of mental diseases such as Alzheimer or Aphasia (PREUSS, 2014; GROSJEAN, 2012).

Nevertheless, many challenges are reported from the literature regarding the oral production development. Panoramically speaking, we may mention interactional problems that students themselves have regarding their oral production. For instance, pupils may face language anxiety whenever they need to speak in front of others or to expose themselves orally in another language (HORWITZ, 2001; RIO, PASIN, DELGADO, 2016). Other typical problems regard the students level differences within a classroom, once beginner or more reluctant students may feel afraid to interact or (and this is most the case) to make a mistake in front of others (ARAGÃO & SANTOS, 2015; ARIFIN, 2017). Similarly, we may mention the lack of a suitable academic, professional and personal background to deal with the most different difficulties that students may have in their oral production development (ALMEIDA, 2013; CORREA, 2014; ARAGÃO, 2017). Additionally, the teacher's language conception about language itself might severely influence in the teaching process. When teachers see language development solely under a structural perspective (LUCAS, 2001; SANTOS, 2017), these ones will primarily work with the development of students' understanding about how the language works and pupils will be given less frequently opportunities to develop their oral production. Because of this, most of these kind of classes

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under this language viewpoint will be overtly focused on the teacher and not on the student. Therefore, they might be more teacher-centered than student-centered (ALMEIDA, 2013).

Nevertheless, under a SCT framework, language itself is understood as one of the main mediational tools for human communication to take place (WERTSCH, TULVISTE, 2005). The meaning in language does not reside in itself. Rather, it emerges within the social use of a language, which is transmitted within different sociocultural loci (PENUEL, WERTSCH, 1995). Language works as a psychological tool per excellence, which is used by us to signify, share and understand our existence and experiences throughout life (JOHNSON, 2009). At the same time, language is also a cultural tool that we use to transform our different experiences into scientific knowledge (SHULMAN & SHULMAN, 2004). This implies that meaning production *by* and *in* the language might change both one and the language itself, once it takes place within different social, physical, historical and cultural contexts, which are permeated by a constellation of social practices (JOHNSON, 2009). Simply put, language may never be taken away from the multidiversified economic, historical, sociocultural and political dimensions that permeate society, mainly within the school context with its richness in language learning opportunities (SHULMAN & SHULMAN, 2004).

We understand in this present-day work that languages learning goes really beyond the mere development of a set of skills in a language. In this line of thought, Tilio (2019) affirms that language learning is a citizenship right, which is guaranteed under the national educational laws (LDB[4]), in its twenty-sixth article. Having the opportunity to properly learn a language equals the access to an extensively higher diversity and cultural plurality within the present globalized world in which we all live. By means of teaching practices in a language that are targeted on the motivations, interests and necessities of students (TILIO, 2008), we may empower our students to act, interact, transform and be transformed by the same changes that these ones bring about within their own sociocultural contexts.

Furthermore, oral production development under a SCT perspective entangles a processual development. This one correlates the development of the Higher Mental Functions (HMF) explained by Vygotsky (1997). These ones correspond to attention, memory, imagination, language itself, which all together aid one to suitably organize one's mental life within different sociocultural contexts. Therefore, in the development of the oral production, language and thought interconnect themselves, giving opportunities for students to develop themselves culturally, linguistically and cognitively. Oral production development does not take place by a mere memorization of different words and structures repeated several times (ALMEIDA, 2013). It happens within an environment where meaningful interactions take

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[4] Available online on: <https://www.jusbrasil.com.br/topicos/11692123/paragrafo-5-artigo-26-da-lei-n-9394-de-20-de-dezembro-de-1996?ref=serp-featured> . Retrieved on: 05.may. 2020.

place among social beings, which collaboratively and dialogically work all together to build meaning in an additional language (KRAMSCH & SULIVAN, 1996). Due to this, each one has his/her time to develop the oral production in English since this process is not homogeneous, but diversified, changeable, unstable process and it will have its own challenges and setbacks to be overcome. Oral production development, therefore, will be dependent on the previous and individual interconnections of a student and his/her colleagues, on their sociocultural contexts, as well as *what* and *how* these ones grapple with the oral production within this ongoing process (JOHNSON, 2009).

In order to assist students in their oral language development, some solutions are suggested, such as the use of more communicative and dialogical oral activities (debates, storytelling, critical oral analysis, drama, among others). Additionally, some nuances of seemingly brand-new temporary solutions have been suggested in the academic literature, most of them involving the use of technological resources to assist ELT professionals worldwide. This is what we will have a look on in the next section.

3.   Technology in the global sphere and its importance in SCT

A large shift has taken place in society since the advent of digital technology in everyday life (CARR, 2010). Since one's very first hours in a day, technology is easily and routinely found in one's daily schedule. Had human beings not made use of such digital tools in the way it is done nowadays, the current world would not have seen dramatic advancements in scientific fields as well as in the most seemingly monotonous human activities (such as paying the bills on the telephone, instead of waiting for a seemingly unending line at the bank, ordering food by food delivery apps, in place of having to go to a restaurant and order a food, among other picturesque ones). Undoubtedly has technology taken over its due place in today's globalized world (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006), shortening cultures, countries and human contact frontiers (AL MUSA, 2002).

As Prensky once affirmed (2001), today's technological world deals essentially with two main world population: the *digital immigrants* and *digital natives*, being the first group represented by the ones who were born before the nineties and the second group the ones who have technology at their disposal as naturally as possible. Paiva (2013) affirmed that, in the same way that digital immigrants had a long time ago their legs to walk around the world being replaced by the wheels (in different means of transportation) or the eyes being assisted by eye lens, today's youth has the computer as a mind peripheric.

At the same time, Prensky (2001) adds up that if the present-day educators really wish to reach their digital native population in the classroom, digital immigrant educators will have to undergo a huge viewpoint shift in order to contextually work with the actual student population, considering the ecological changes that technology brought about to the whole society (PAIVA, 2013). According to Jenkins (2006),

the world has been living what she names a *digital renaissance*. In the same way that the Renaissance period took place in whole Europe, bringing with it a cultural and intellectual transformation in the former society, shifting the way people generally fathomed the world around them, digital technology has likewise moved people forward to a new mindset, which is seemingly inevitable to be pictured out disassociated of the presence of technology in one's everyday life.

Regarding the social changes that technology has brought with itself, Chambers and Bax (2006) laid down seven typical normalization phases that circumscribe the use of digital tools in any population as a whole. These normalization stages are the following ones: the first one entangles the *initial supporters*, in which some teachers begin to utilize technology under a given curiosity. The second stage entails the *ignorance* or *skepticism*, in which the majority of local people remain skeptic about the use of technology or may even unknow that such a given technology exists. The third phase is about people *initially trying out* technology in their contextualized situation, with relatively negative results, as technology does not seem to bring with itself any advantage. In the fourth stage, one (institution or person) affirms that a given technological resource actually works out perfectly, as people try out eventually the previously rejected technology and realize that there are, indeed, some advantage in making use of these technologies. The fifth stage corresponds to the *fear* or *reverence* regarding technology, considering that some people start making use of these tools, albeit some fear or astonishment which is commonly felt by these ones. The penultimate phase refers to the first *normalization* phase, when technology begins to be gradually seen as a normal resource. Lastly, the *final normalization* stage includes the one in which technological resources are integrated to ones' lives and may seemingly become an invisible/normalized asset of ones' daily routine (BAX, 2003).

Concerning specific changes in Education, technology has brought many wonderings as to the role of teachers in classroom, including language teachers themselves (PAIVA, 2013). With the advent of many online courses platforms (RIO, 2018a), it had been questioned whether teachers' roles would still be necessarily important in education, as they could be, sooner or later, replaced by technological tools that would teach infinitely and tirelessly a huge multitude of people. The virtual and digital tools that we possess nowadays challenge teachers' roles in Education, as they take out teachers as the sole teaching protagonists in class, once teachers themselves (most of them, still digital immigrants) oftentimes learn something new from their students. An open space is created, where teachers and students may share their distinguished knowledge about technology use and a given content, as the learning process happens collaboratively (PINHO, 2013).

It is important to mention that many countries worldwide have been emphasizing the use of technology in Education. Some initiatives have been noticed in different places, as Paiva (2013) stresses

out about other countries' realities in Latin America. In Peru, for instance, she affirms that one may see the acquisition of more than forty thousand laptops for the State schools. One may also see it in Uruguay, with the Government project of purchasing portable laptops to all the country elementary schools' teachers and students. In Brazil, one may sight that with the publication of national documents, such as the launch of informatics programs for schools countrywide including Proinfo (National Informatization Program) and the *Universidade Aberta* (Open University). In these Brazilian examples, many long-distance learning university courses were launched in order to both facilitate the students' busy daily study and work routines. Some isolated actions have similarly been taken by a small quantity of university professors, as these ones are altogether mentioned by Paiva (2013), like launching disciplines and teaching training courses for future and present-day teachers. These initiatives are taken in order to professionally assist teachers to nowadays' educational needs (JENKINS, 2006).

Let us see, at this time, how digital technology has been utilized in the ELT field, more specifically, in the teaching of the oral skill.

3.1 Digital technologies in the ELT field and corresponding appliances to the development of the oral production

The use of technology in the English language pedagogy field has been widely explored (DAVIES & RÜSCHOFF, 2013) in teaching practices ranging from the teaching of one of the four main skills (KESER, 2012; PATEL, 2013) to the teaching of the language as a whole (KESSLER, 2006; WARSCHAUER & MESKILL, 2000). Many changes have been taking place in more authentic and suitably contextualized practices worldwide, as a host of scientific studies are published annually regarding the benefits and negative effects of the (in)efficient use of technologies (GOMES, 2015; RÜDDIGKEIT, 2016). This has been the case, once technology itself should not be considered as the salvation of any teacher in any situation, as a solving-all-educational-problems tool, but rather as a potential one to be used in teaching and learning. Yet, it may be fathomably vowed that technology will never replace teachers from their positions, but teachers who do not make use of authentic digital technology will be possibly taken over by the ones who do (PAIVA, 2013).

Muir-Herzig (2004) states that technology brings into classroom a wider variety of possibilities than the traditional classroom setting, such as videos from web platforms (e.g. *YouTube*, *Vimeo*, *Dailymotion*, among others). This may help in making, when given due assistance, students more able to critically work out with the information offered on the Internet, consequently leading the classroom routine to a more student-centered one, rather than to a teacher-centered classroom daily procedure. Correa (2015) and Costa (2013), for instance, made use of these video platforms to work upon students'

oral production, with positive results being mentioned in their overall speaking capacity, alongside beneficial results in the decline of students' anxiety to speak English.

According to Wellings & Levine (2009), technology offers countless learning opportunities, such as teacher' and learners' improvements, expansion of educational resources' access to professional, scholastic and specialized content, new teaching methodological changes as well as a larger learning time period for both teachers and students, as digital tools may enable teachers and students to have a closer relationship either inside or outside the classroom. Students are also given more room to interact with the teacher and other classroom colleagues when they have access to digital and asynchronous tools, once they are able to produce the language in a longer time period than in a face-to-face conversation interaction (POP *et al*, 2011).

Under a SCT perspective, technological tools would work as mediated learning tools for language development (PINHO, 2013). Additionally, digital technology would go beyond the mere utilization of single tools for a very specific purpose (SANTOS, GAMERO, GIMENEZ, 2014). Technology is also a relevant mediatonal, virtual and empowering environment which allows social interaction among different human beings as well as these ones may bring with themselves their sociocultural and historical contexts (JOHNSON, 2009). This may lead, consequently, to oral production development in English (PINHO, 2013). Furthermore, the use of different digital technologies and the collaboration among its parcitipants end up in crafting virtual communities (FERREIRA & BIANCHETTI, 2014), where unlike social interests take place within a constant fight and meaning production shared among its heterogeneous participants.

With regard to specific technological tools being used to the development of the oral production, I present here both *positive* and *negative* issues that may occur when one wills to employ such tools to the development of this one. A fairly considerable number of studies have been reporting positive results concerning the use of technological resources in the development of the oral production (ARAGÃO, 2017; MALASARI, 2017; POP et al, 2011; YANGUAS & FLORES, 2014).

The study carried out by Aragão (2017), for instance, made use of the WhatsApp voice message tool with a group of ELT teachers, whose oral production was not fairly well developed. According to the Brazilian researcher, teachers tended to feel more comfortably able to utter their sentences by the smartphone app, as their time limit to produce the language was longer than in normal everyday life conversation. Pop al. (2011) investigated the integration of an online forum with the support of voice recording tools for extra class discussions in English. Similar results to the one brought by Aragão (2017) were found, considering that students felt rather more confident to speak in English, since they had more time to prepare their speech before sending their corresponding files.

Yanguas and Flores (2014) carried out a study comparing students' oral production in both face-to-face and computer-based interactions, finding out that the restrained time in the face-to-face conversation could bring more anxiety than the computer-based ones. Students reported that when they did not need to pay close heed to interactional factors (nodding, mimes, facial expressions, among others) coming from their peers, they could concentrate more precisely on what they were to produce orally. Tarighat and Khodabakhsh (2016) conducted a survey with their English students with the support of smartphones language learning apps, more specifically on those which could primarily work out with the oral production. They found that students, who had been having more traditional teaching classes (whose focus had been based on the learning of grammar structures), felt more comfortable to notice their voices and even accents whenever they had to send an oral message to each other. There was similarly an overall improvement in students' motivation to more boldly speak English in and out of the class context.

Albeit the positively encouraging results previously mentioned, there has been, however, a body of research alleging that the use of technology may negatively affect students' language learning process as a whole and the oral production particularly. Warschauer and Meskill (2000), for instance, affirmed that whenever teachers are willing to make use of digital technologies in class, they should bear in mind that it will require an *investment of money* (which, at times, might be unreasonably high). It may be necessary to have a huge *investment of time* (as teaching and learning development of teachers and students will have to be given in order to use a given technological resource). It will be eventually necessary for teachers to grapple with an *uncertainty of results* (once some of online digital technologies may suddenly and abruptly change or move away, or cease to exist in a fairly short time).

More specifically regarding the oral production, Aragão, Paiva and Júnior (2017), apart from their positive results brought by their research participants in the use of digital technologies to the development of the oral production, one participant related that the use of such tools revealed an artificial oral production in English. This pupil needed to wait longer for an oral response in the web online forum utilized in the study. The same student likewise said that, despite the difficulties that one may have in real-life interactions, the feedback and conversation return from another person is usually swifter and, consequently, more natural to what language learners are expected to have in the real daily life world.

In the Tai college context, Sung (2012) reported having had Internet connection breakdowns alongside some English language learning platforms, as these ones had their accesses blocked to some students. Although pupils were eagerly willing to work with their oral production development, such technical problems impeded some of them to advance in their oral skill performance. The study carried out by Bell et al. (2007) brought some negative outcomes regarding the use of podcasts by their students. They mention that even though the podcast resource was a fairly interesting one, some of the students did

not feel comfortable at solely listening to longer audios in English and not having any visual aid to support their overall understanding of the listened passages. This had brought some students to boredom and lack of motivation to speak after they had listened to such podcasts. A study made in Brazil by Costa (2013) revealed problems that students had with their cellphones in trying to work with Bluetooth, voice and video recording activities. The researcher was compelled, thence, due to the lack of students' cellphones technologies, to ask for financial support from a given sponsorship program with the view to acquiring some cell phones to the needy pupils. A similar situation has been reported by Chinerry (2006).

Shyamlee and Phil (2012) mention four typical problems stemming from the ineffective use of digital technologies by language teachers. The first one regards the *major means replacement by the assisting ones*. It entails a teacher total-dependency on technology use, making the traditional and old-fashioned class style acquire new colors, as a way to refurbish the old chalk and talk practices with "brand-new" technologies. In this case, the *assisting tool* begins to take over the most important one, which is more than a tool in itself: teachers' creativity to manage any educational tool. The second thorny issue is the *loss of speaking communication*. It entails the overuse of digital technologies that hinder students' and teachers' participation in class, as the classes become more focused in making use of a wide range of educative tools, rather than fostering students' communication performance itself.

The third troublesome aspect refers to the *abstract thinking replacement by imaginable thinking*. It concerns the shift of students' core abstract thinking capacities (reasoning, hypothesizing, inferring, contrasting (SHYAMLEE & PHIL, 2012; RIO, 2018a)) for more simple ones. By overemphasizing the use of pictures and videos, students would be hindered from reading more thought-provoking texts or more profoundly developed articles, which would consequently require more abstract thinking abilities from them. It may be understood this issue as if everything that was proportionated to students had already been summarized and did not need any further critical considerations to be worked upon.

Lastly, the authors also elicit the *restriction of students' thinking potential*, which is similar to the previously mentioned aspect, but in a broader sense. The authors likewise cite the fact that some teachers may wishfully utilize reviews or summaries from some more original in-depth texts, which would eventually eschew students from having a lengthier oral discussion about a given topic.

Summing up the aforementioned aspects, it may be arguably concluded that the success or failure of appropriately and contextually applying digital tools in classrooms, mainly in the development of the oral production, entails not only the appropriateness of a given technological tool in class. Rather, it involves equally the teacher's and pupils' knowledge and understanding conditions of how these very ones will subsequently employ such technological resources. Technology has never been brought to the educational field to substitute human beings, but, it is definitely an inextricably and brightly potential tool

to be used in and out of class, bringing more meaningfully fruitful results to both teachers and English language learners.

After rapidly sighting the theoretical background presented so far, let us glance upon the present-day research carried out with teachers worldwide.

4. Methodology section

During the very first weeks in 2019 it was possible to gather 30 responses stemming from ELT teachers of thirteen countries, thanks to the assistance of online forums and social media network ELT groups. Teachers were freely invited to voice their opinions regarding the use of digital technologies in their teaching practices, in an online questionnaire (made out by the *Google Forms platform*), as well as to mention their experiences with digital tools in the development of the oral production. The questionnaire comprised eleven questions, with the very first ones asking the participants to inform their background (their age, the time length they have been English language teachers and their home country). The other questions regarded the use of digital technologies as a whole and some questions comprised the use of these tools in the development of the oral production. We will focus on the questions 3 and four as they are more related to the axioms related to the use of the digital technologies and the development of the oral production. This was an initial analysis so that we may identify what the opinions were of these ELT teachers in a global scale.

It is noteworthy to mention that the results here presented were examined under the qualitative approach (suitably associated to an interpretivist viewpoint), once Johnson & Christensen (2008) together highlight that this analysis type assists a given researcher to arrive at the heart of a research inner experiences. Such an interpretivist view likewise helps researchers to fathom how the diversified participants meanings are developed in contingent circumstances.

5. Questionnaire[5] and given preliminary results' analysis

We present here firstly the questions regarding the research participants' teaching background (questions 6, 9, 10 and 11, respectively), considering that these ones portray general assets concerning these teachers' teaching practices. Question 6 (*How often do you make use of digital technologies as for the teaching of the speaking skill?*) aimed at knowing the frequency that English teachers employ digital resources in their development of the oral production. Eleven teachers (corresponding to 36,7% of the

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[5] The questionnaire is available in the appendix.

participants) say that they usually make use of digital tools. Eight participants (26.7%) affirmed that they oftentimes apply such technological tools. Two teachers (6.7%) said that they always employ digital technologies as for the development of the oral production. Two teachers (6.7%) vowed that they sometimes utilize digital technologies, at the same time that six of them (20%) rarely employ digital tools and, lastly, only one teacher (3.3%) affirmed never making use of digital technologies in the development of the oral production. If one takes the words which correspond to a higher frequency of activities (such as *oftentimes*, *usually* and *always*), one is to have a 70% of participants (21 out of 30) applying digital tools specifically for the teaching of oral production, which might be a positive outcome, considering the potential shifts that technological resources have brought to the ELT field (WARSCHAUER & MESKILL, 2000; PRENSKY, 2001; PAIVA, 2013; AUTHOR, 2018b).

Question 9 (*How long have you been teaching English?*) was displayed with the view to gathering general information concerning the teaching practice time length of these language professionals. Most of them have been teaching English for more than a decade (53.3% - 16 participants). Eight teachers (26.7%) affirmed that they have an English teaching experience ranging from one to three years in the field. Three teachers (10%) claimed that they have been teaching English between four to six years, a number that was also represented by the ones who have been doing it between seven to nine years (10%). The majority of teachers are seemingly experienced ones with regard to their time that they have spent on teaching the English language.

Question 10 (*What country do you come from?*) asked participants about their country origins, in order to better understand from where in the world were reported these teaching practices with technology, as a better way to understand whether or not the Brazilian teaching reality (the one from which the present-day research author comes from) differs from the ones pictured out by these teachers. Most of the teachers in this study come from Brazil (11 participants – 37% of them), whereas five of them (17%) come from Australia. Responses also came from the same number of teachers (2 teachers – 7% of the total group) from Sri Lanka, the United States, and Chile. The other teachers, one from each country (representing 3% each one), come from countries like Guatemala, Ireland, Pakistan, Libya, Russia, Spain, Ukraine and Vietnam. Such a variety of answers regarding their home-countries may likely open new large windows of opportunities for further research about these same teachers' teaching contexts, as it is possibly feasible to compare in-depth their narratives with the ones regarding the Brazilian reality (COSTA, 2013; GOMES, 2015).

Question 11 (*How old are you?*) displays many *digital immigrant* participants (PRENSKY, 2001), whose knowledge about technology might have probably come from the learning of applying technology as it would be emerging in the classroom contexts of these teachers. Participants' age fairly ranged.

Twelve teachers (40%) said they were between 26-36 years old. Eleven ones (36.7%) affirmed that they were between 37-50 years old. Four teachers (13.3%) claimed they were between 50-60 years old and finally, three participants (10%) said that they were between 18-25 years old. In an initial analysis, it is possible to infer that most of these teachers are somewhere in-between the *digital native and immigrant* world population, as sixteen (53.3%) of them range from 18 to 36 years old, what may fairly demonstrate that thankfully new generations are seemingly emerging in the ELT field, possibly bringing with themselves teaching practices more aligned with digitally technological resources (PAIVA, 2013; RIO, 2018a, 2018b).

The next questions, which deal more broadly with the use of digital technology and specifically with its utilization in the development of the oral production, will be (as said beforehand) concisely analyzed, as they are more related to the qualitative analysis scope.

Question 1 (*Dear English teacher, please tick the box that best describes what your opinion concerning technology and English teaching is*, in which: *5 - strongly agree; 4 - agree; 3 - undecided; 2 - disagree; 1 - strongly disagree*) was set in order to know how much each participant saw himself/herself regarding the use of such digital tools in their teaching practices as a whole and in the development of the oral production:

Figure 3: Teachers responses to question 1 likert scale.
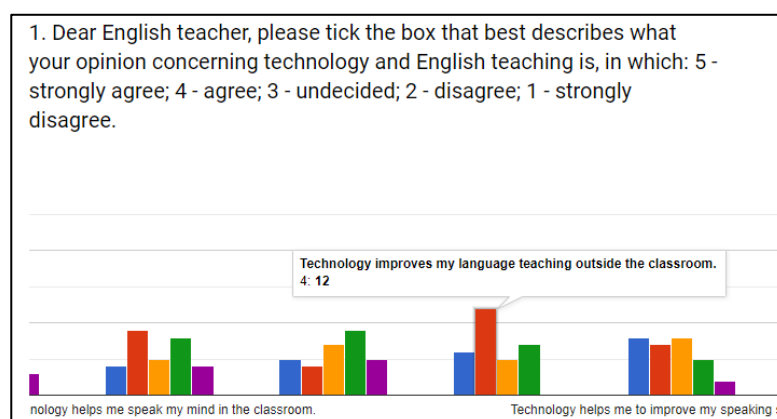
Teachers' opinions about the importance of technology in teaching the language and in the development of the oral production *per se* varied considerably. Yet, it may be seen from their responses that few of them have a negative viewpoint towards technology in the ELT class. Many of them, for instance, believe that technology is a great tool to be used both inside and outside the school context for the development of the oral production (more than 70% of the participants chose numbers 5 and 4, corresponding to *strongly agree* and *agree*). A considerable number of teachers also positively affirmed

that digital technology increases teachers' motivation to teach English (25 teachers – 83,3% choosing anew the numbers 5 and 4). These results corroborate with the ones previously presented by Paiva (2013) and other researchers (KESER, 2012; PATEL, 2013), considering that, thanks to the multiple potentialities brought by digital technologies, new scenarios and environments may be created to enable collaboration to take place (PINHO, 2013; SANTOS, GAMERO, GIMENEZ, 2014) and to further develop students oral production.

Question 2 (*Which of these technological websites, apps or online platforms have you already used to teach the speaking skill?*) targeted teachers' digital tool use knowledge, in order to verify which tools these ones made use in and out of the class context. Some of the available options were *Duolingo*, *Busuu*, *Babbel*, *Hello Talk*, *Learn to speak English*, *English Conversation Practice*, *Wlíngua*, among others (as they are Language learning cellphone apps, likewise available on websites). *Edx* and *Coursera* represented the Online website platforms for Massive Online Open Courses (hereafter MOOC) as well as *Skype, WhatsApp*, *Telegram* composed the social and message interaction apps which could be properly applied for the enhancement of the speaking skill. *YouTube*, *Vimeo, TED Talks* and *Dailymotion* belonged to the video platforms options, as some specially designed channels on such websites have been similarly created for the teaching of English and of the oral production.

As teachers were able to tick more than one option/response in this question, the most mentioned digital tool used by teachers was the Online video platforms (reaching a score of 21 teachers – 71% of them). In second place was *Duolingo* (9 respondents – 30%). *Babbel* and Wlingua with the same score (7 teachers – 23.3%). Some teachers did not know about some of the aforementioned tools (Busuu, Epals (a student exchange project platform) and *Learn to speak English*, with 0% of choice). The other options available in these questions were all marked by at least one teacher (3% of them), such as *WhatsApp*, *Skype* and the aforementioned video platforms. These results suggest that teachers should be more encouraged and more authentically trained to utilize a wider range of digital tools in class, in order to potentialize the use of more authentic and dynamic materials (POP et al, 2011; ARAGÃO, 2017; MALASARI, 2017), which might contribute to students' oral production development (PAIVA, 2018).

Question 3 and 4 asked the teachers to report negative (in question 3) and positive (in question 4) experiences regarding the use of digital tools in the development of the oral production. As these answers are more text-based like, we will pick up some of the most representative results in the present study.

In question 3, ten teachers (33.3%) related not remembering whether they had a positive outcome making use of digital tools for the teaching of the oral production in English. T1 (the first teacher) mentioned that she made use of the *Edmondo* platform, which helped her to have frequent contact with students. T6 displayed a rather neutral answer to the use of technology, as he said that it is just a device,

which has its possible positive assets, but should not be forgotten to be just an instrument and not an all-problems-definitive solution (PAIVA, 2013; GOMES, 2015; RÜDDIGKEIT, 2016).

T1 cites her experience with a child game that helped in the development of the student's oral production. T6 affirms that technology is merely an instrument, which might aid in the English teaching process. T15 believes that technology is an interesting way to create opportunities for pupils' communication, mentioning even the use of the WhatsApp cellphone app. This result agrees with the study brought by Aragão (2017), which showed how this app might bring creative means of communication for students and teachers. Similarly, we see that T15 also understands that by means of digital technology, different virtual communities might be crafted, which might display a sociocultural understanding of digital technology, different from T6. T29 also displayed her use of YouTube videos so that students could have enough input (received information) to further discuss in class.

Teacher 38 said that she always had positive results, albeit some unwillingness from her students to make use of technology. The same teacher mentioned afterwards that her students' noncompliance was given to their lack of knowledge to use digital tools in class, a result that is commonly found in the academic literature (PAIVA, 2018). It is fairly interesting to notice the creativity that some of these teachers have reported in making use of their available tools to develop the oral production, as these ones are potentially able to significantly assist students with more contextually suitable and modern teaching tools (ARAGÃO, 2017). T15 and T17, who also made use of YouTube videos in class, are in agreement with the results brought by some researchers (COSTA, 2013; CORREA, 2015). One may see the desire of these teachers to bring in more fruitful and contextualized communicative activities that may at the same time empower their students (TILIO, 2009) and give them more opportunities to autonomously and collaboratively (JOHNSON, 2009) act in society as future protagonists and citizenships (TILIO, 2019)

Chart 1: Some teachers' responses excerpts to question 3.

T1	Edmodo. It's a great way to organize material / maintain communication.
T6	Technology is just a tool, not a skill. But it does help a lot.
T15	I think technology can offer great opportunities to foster students' communication, WhatsApp for example is really interesting, not just for boring information.
T22	I find the Internet a nice place for students to share information, especially on FB, with posts, videos and different hashtags
T29	I used YouTube videos and had the students talk about it.
T38	I always had excellent results, although there were some resistance from students.

Question 4 displayed negative experiences and some inner wishes that teachers have regarding the use of technological tools for the development of the oral production. T1 reported having a gloomy experience with her students. Most of them did not make use of voice message tools, which are freely

available in the app, as this would eventually help develop their oral production, even if these pupil had been requested to do it. These students' possible resistance corroborate with the results brought by the literature (ARAGÃO, 2017; MALASARI, 2017; POP et al, 2011; YANGUAS & FLORES, 2014), showing that pupils, even though they might be considered *digital natives* (PRENSKY, 2001), they might as well present difficulties to be and act in the virtual world and to make use of digital technologies to develop the oral production. T6 affirms that he dislikes the Duolingo learning app layout, as he considers that there must be another better way to deal with language teaching apart from mere word-by-word translations (ALMEIDA, 2013) teaching methodologies. T10 also mentions the problem she had with advertisement on the Internet. She believes that such online popping-up messages may occasionally drift students' attention away, possibly demonstrating their lack of autonomy to deal with such common featured aspects of today's Internet websites (PAIVA, 2013).

T15 mentions similarly his problems with technical issues, which frustrated him to develop his students' speaking skill. Interestingly enough, he recognizes his need to improve on the use of his technology skills. All these results collectively agree with reports brought by Sung (2012), Bell and collaborators (2007) about technical problems, which might hinder students' opportunities to develop their oral production. Students' unwillingness to use technological resources and students' indiscipline (SAVASÇI, 2014) as well as the normalization process that needs to occur to teacher 15 (CHAMBERS, BAX, 2006), who seems to be somewhere in between the third or fourth stage in applying digital technologies and having such negative results, due to a given inexperience or lack of the institution technological support.

T19 has a neutral view about digital technologies, once she believes that technology alone does not win students' timidness, which might be associated to the language anxiety (HORWITZ, 2001) concern. She also believes that technology might bring about favorable circumstances to collaboratively develop their linguistic production, which might contribute to their oral production as well (POP et al, 2011). We may see a sociocultural understanding about language and technology by this teacher (WERTSCH, 1995; VYGOTSKY, 2005; JOHNSON, 2009), once she believes that by means of digital technology collaboration may help students to move forward in their language development.

Nevertheless, she also mentions the importance of teachers being able to suitably manage digital technologies. She mentioned one episode with Google Meets and the infortunate event caused by the school internet connection. Furthermore, she also mentions that students felt afraid to talk in English, although they were distant from each other. She has probably mentioned this because, according to the academic literature, students would feel nervous or anxious to speak an additional language when in front of others due to interactional problems (HORWITZ, 2001; BROWN & LEE, 2015). As a result, she

mentions that technology alone is not able to overcome students linguistic problems, but teachers, when suitably prepared to deal with these difficulties, may be the assistants to give authentic and collaborative aid to students overcome their challenges towards technology and oral production development (PAIVA, 2018).

     T38 displays an interesting episode with an elderly student, who went through a negative experience due to his unknowledge of how to use voice messages in an online virtual community. We infer that this negative experience with technology might have created serious problems for the development of the oral production of this unfortunate pupil (ARIFIN, 2017). It is important to notice that the creation of such virtual communities alone does not consequently imply that this new environment will not present any challenge or troublesome aspects to be overcome as it happens in the school context (SANTOS, GAMERO, GIMENEZ, 2014). Actually, we may see here the transposition of students' competition, now from the offline to the online dimension. The lack of knowledge of this digital immigrant student (PRENSY, 2001) might represent another challenge for teachers who are also digital immigrants and for the assistance to digital natives, who may (such as in this episode reported by T38) have digital immigrant colleagues in class. Not only would teachers but also students themselves have to be more friendly, receptive and collaborative to assist in the development of the oral production (WERTSCH, 1995; JOHNSON, 2009), in the use of digital technologies (BAX, 2003) and in the creation of new possibilities to further students' and teachers' emancipatory participation in society (TILIO, 2019).

Chart 2: Some teachers' responses excerpts to question 4.

T1	One group of mine did not use WhatsApp as I expected: just 5 out of 24 sent voice messages (which was requested).
T6	Duolingo. Although it was created by a fellow Guatemelan, I don't think translating every word is the best way to learn another language.
T10	Speakers online may have like wet English level, too much ads on sites. Students can be distracted from the task easily
T15	I had a problem when I as teaching speaking skill. It was technical problem; the speed of the Internet was not good enough for me to give the lesson to my students. I wish I could know more, how to use technology to teach this important skill
T19	I know that people normally say that technology gives you many possibilities for pair and group work with all the language skills. This is true. But, if the teacher doesn't know how to use it correctly, it can be a nightmare. I had one time a big problem with Google Meets, because of the connection in our school and because students felt shy, even if far away from each other! I think technology alone doesn't win shyness, you know? Teachers, on the other hand, really do!
T38	I will never forget the episode with from my elderly student: he could understand English very well, but he always had problems with voice messages, he just didn't know how to send them and once he sent a wrong message to our group. Guess what? During the next weeks students used to mock this elderly because of his wrong message. It's a shame, isn't it? But it can indeed happen!

Let us head, lastly, to the final section of this article, in which some initial considerations are drawn from what has been discussed hitherto.

Preliminary conclusions

The present article aimed at shedding some light into the research regarding the development of the oral production in English by the additional help of digital technology, under a SCT perspective (VYGOTSKY, 2005; JOHNSON, 2009). It has been presented in this study the potential benefits and commonplace constraints that the oral production typically presents to both English language teachers and students (LUOMA, 2004; HARMER, 2007; BROWN & LEE, 2015). No wonder it has been seen that such a complex production takes a huger amount of effort to be developed due to several challenges (BURNS & GOH, 2012; RIO, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; SAVAŞÇI, 2014).

Nevertheless, it has been regarded the possible positive effect that digital technology may have in the ELT world, considering the number of studies that has been conducted until nowadays (CARR, 2010; JENKINS, 2006; PAIVA, 2013). These ones, as we have shown, demonstrate that these current tools may have their worth in assisting both teachers and pupils, either inside or outside the school context (PINHO, 2013). Similarly, we have noticed that technology, when properly managed by teachers and students, may create different opportunities and digital environments where interaction might aid in the development of the oral production (JOHNSON, 2009; PINHO, 2013; PAIVA, 2018).

From the online questionnaire brought to thirty teachers, stemming from thirteen countries worldwide, it is possible to see that their results corroborate the current research stage regarding the use of digital technology in present-day teachers' reality, as teachers mentioned their use of videos platforms, language learning apps, instant message apps, the Internet itself and their vast world of possibilities (COSTA, 2015). Teachers have also demonstrated their unknowledge of applying such tools and their willingness to outperform next time with their students, overcoming their *digital immigrants'* deficiencies (PRENSKY, 2001).

Inspite certain teachers' unknowledge about using digital technology, we may see their wishes to bring in more authentically contextualized opportunities to develop their students oral production (TILIO, 2008, 2019; JOHNSON, 2009). As some teachers reported, technology alone is not able to overcome students' difficulties with their oral production. Rather, as T38 mentioned, it may even worsen the case, bringing the same previous challenges that took place in the offline world regarding language anxiety and oral production development (HORWITZ, 2001; PAIVA, 2018) into the online one. Under a SCT

perspective, digital technology helps in the creation of a digital environment that may empower students to move forward in their oral production development (JOHNSON, 2009).

The present-day research, although an initial one in analyzing teachers' opinions concerning the use of digital tools in the development of the oral production, adds up significantly to both ELT teachers and researchers, who are eagerly willing to shift the reality of the development of the oral production oftentimes reported by the ELT literature (ALMEIDA, 2013; PAIVA, 2013; RIO, 2017, 2018a, 2018b; RIO, LIMA, 2018). Further results and analysis may be carried out from the current research, as to more deeply bring more thoughtful considerations and innovative practices, that might come along from teachers and researchers collaboratively working all together (PINHO, 2013).

Future work may be promoted in order to investigate teachers' practices with the use of diversified digital technologies for the development of the oral production in different teaching contexts (State school, private schools, language schools, bilingual programs, among others). All in all, these further studies may bridge the gap between students, teachers and the use of digital technologies, since both participants seem to present difficulties as to the use of these potential tools (PRESNKY, 2001; PINHO, 2013; PAIVA, 2018). Above all, we all wish to bring more equitable, democratic and emancipatory teaching practices, which empower, capacitate and allow students and teachers to meaningfully act in society and fight against social injustices (TILIO, 2008, 2019).

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APPENDIX – Research Questionnaire

1. Dear English teacher, please tick the box that best describes what your opinion concerning technology and English teaching is, in which: 5 - strongly agree; 4 - agree; 3 - undecided; 2 - disagree; 1 - strongly disagree.

	1	2	3	4	5
Technology increases my motivation to teach English.					
Technology helps me find out about my needs in teaching English.					
Technology does not equip me with the skills I need to teach English.					
Technology improves my relationship with students.					
Technology improves my collaboration/group skills with students and other teachers.					
Technology enhances my ability to better help students in tasks such as pair, group and project works.					
Technology improves my class quality					
Technology helps me to speak better with students					
Technology does not help me reduce my anxiety to speak English.					
Technology improves my language teaching outside the classroom.					
Technology helps me to improve my speaking skill teaching.					
Technology provides me different resources to teach all the four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) in English.					
Technology does not help me be more focused on teaching English.					

2. Which of these technological websites, apps or online platforms have you already used to teach the speaking skill? Tick more than once.

( ) Duolingo (App/Website) ( ) Busuu (App/Website)   ( )Wlíngua (App/Website) ( ) Memrise (App/Website) ( ) Babbel (App/Website) ( ) Italki (App/Website)   ( ) Epals (Online school platform) ( ) Hello English (App/Website) ( ) Edx (Online Courses Platform) ( ) Hello Talk (App/ Website) ( ) Tandem (App/ Website)   ( ) Learn to speak English (App/Website) ( ) Future learn (Online Courses Platform) ( ) Social Media Networks (Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn)

( ) Internet Communication tools (Skype, Hangouts, Google Meet).

3. Have you ever had a positive experience using different technological resources (websites, apps, online courses platforms) to teach the speaking skill? If so, how has it happened?

4. Have you ever had a negative experience using different technological resources (websites, apps, online courses platforms) to teach the speaking skill? If so, how has it happened?

5. How do you think technology may help you teach the speaking skill in English both inside and outside the classroom?

6. How often do you make use of digital technologies as for the teaching of the speaking skill?

a) Rarely   b) Oftentimes   c) Usually   d) Always   e) Never

7. What is the importance of digital technologies in today's English teaching world?

8. What are the main difficulties (when these ones take place) you have to make use of technologies in your English language teaching routine?

9. How long have you been teaching English?

a) 1-3 years   b) 4-6 years   c) 7-9 years   d) more than a decade

10. What country do you come from?

11. How old are you?

a) 15-25 years old   b) 26-36 years old c) 37-50 years old   d) 50-60 years old e) older than 60 years old