# ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS IN VISUALLY IMPAIRED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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**Abstract.** *This thesis explores effective methods for teaching speaking skills to visually impaired English language learners (VILELLs). It focuses on auditory, tactile, and interactive strategies that enhance oral communication, confidence, and linguistic competence. The study emphasizes inclusive pedagogy, adaptive technology, and multimodal learning approaches within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Findings highlight that auditory modeling, peer interaction, and the integration of assistive technologies foster significant improvement in learners' speaking fluency and confidence. The research concludes that inclusive, empathy-driven teaching methods are essential in ensuring equal participation and success of visually impaired learners in language classrooms.*

## Introduction

Teaching English to visually impaired learners presents both challenges and opportunities for educators. Speaking, as one of the four core language skills, plays a central role in real-life communication and social inclusion. However, traditional speaking instruction often relies heavily on visual cues such as facial expressions, gestures, or lip movements, making it less accessible for visually impaired students. The need to develop alternative, inclusive pedagogical approaches is, therefore, crucial.

The purpose of this study is to explore strategies that enhance speaking skills among visually impaired English learners through the use of auditory and tactile learning methods, adaptive technology, and inclusive classroom practices. This research also aims to shed light on how teachers can adapt communicative teaching methods to better meet the needs of students who rely primarily on auditory and kinesthetic channels for learning.

Inclusive education theory (Ainscow, 2005) asserts that teaching should accommodate diverse learner needs rather than expecting all students to fit a uniform instructional model. This framework is especially relevant for visually impaired learners who require alternative sensory pathways for language input and output. Previous research has shown that visually impaired learners often demonstrate advanced auditory discrimination, verbal reasoning, and memory retention (Kamei-Hannan & Ricci, 2015; Hersh & Johnson, 2010). These strengths can be leveraged to facilitate effective speaking instruction when guided by teachers who understand both language pedagogy and accessibility principles.

Numerous studies have explored inclusive strategies for teaching language skills to students with visual impairments. According to O'Connell, Moriarty, and Smyth (2019), assistive technology plays a transformative role in inclusive education, allowing learners to engage in speaking and listening activities through voice recorders, screen readers, and text-

to-speech software. Similarly, Adebiyi (2017) emphasizes that technology-mediated language learning tools can bridge the accessibility gap for students who are unable to process visual input.

Research by Kamei-Hannan and Ricci (2015) found that auditory and tactile learning modes enhance vocabulary retention and pronunciation accuracy when learners engage with repeated listening tasks. Likewise, Çolak (2021) noted that auditory modeling combined with peer-based speaking practice promotes communicative competence among visually impaired learners.

Inclusive pedagogy theory, developed by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011), encourages teachers to create flexible learning environments that enable participation for all learners rather than modifying standard practices only after challenges arise. This proactive mindset is crucial in designing language lessons that naturally integrate auditory and tactile modes of learning.

This qualitative study employed interviews and classroom observations to examine effective strategies for teaching speaking skills to visually impaired learners. The participants included 10 English language teachers working in special education institutions and 15 visually impaired students aged 14–20 enrolled in EFL programs. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focusing on teaching techniques, learner engagement, and challenges faced during speaking lessons. Classroom observations were conducted over a 6-week period to record teaching methods, student interactions, and use of assistive technology.

Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and effective instructional strategies. Themes were derived inductively from teacher narratives and classroom behaviors, with a focus on recurring approaches that enhanced learner participation and verbal output.

One of the most effective methods observed was the use of audio modeling, where teachers recorded model conversations, pronunciation drills, and listening exercises. Learners repeatedly listened to these recordings to practice stress, intonation, and rhythm. This method aligns with Nation and Newton's (2009) communicative fluency approach, emphasizing input-based learning. Teachers reported that consistent exposure to authentic spoken models improved students' pronunciation and confidence in oral expression. Group and pair activities involving both sighted and visually impaired peers were shown to enhance social confidence and fluency. According to Bandura's (1986) social learning theory, learning occurs through observation and imitation; however, in this context, imitation occurs through auditory perception rather than visual cues. Peer-based speaking tasks encouraged real communication and reduced anxiety, which is a major barrier in language production (MacIntyre, 2017). Teachers employed tactile cue systems—such as raised-line diagrams, textured symbols, or 3D conversation maps—to represent turn-taking and sentence structure. These tactile supports allowed learners to conceptualize dialogue patterns without visual input. As identified by Argyropoulos and Papazafiri (2012), tactile

literacy enhances cognitive mapping in blind learners, supporting language organization and coherence in speaking tasks. The use of technology, including screen readers (e.g., JAWS), speech-to-text programs, and recording devices, provided learners with real-time feedback and self-assessment opportunities. These tools allowed students to review their spoken performance, identify pronunciation errors, and monitor progress autonomously. O'Connell et al. (2019) argue that such technologies democratize access to linguistic input and enable more independent learning experiences. Teacher empathy, patience, and adaptability were consistently mentioned as critical factors in motivating learners. Teachers who fostered an emotionally supportive classroom environment helped learners overcome speaking anxiety. Inclusive attitudes not only improved performance but also enhanced students' self-esteem and willingness to communicate (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Developing speaking skills among visually impaired English learners requires creative, inclusive, and flexible pedagogical practices. The findings demonstrate that auditory and tactile modalities can successfully substitute for visual input when combined with supportive teaching and technological tools. Educators should focus on auditory-rich instruction, peer collaboration, and emotional encouragement to promote active communication.

Future research should explore curriculum design specifically tailored to visually impaired learners, integrating Braille-based speech tasks and voice-interactive platforms. Policymakers and teacher training institutions must also prioritize professional development in inclusive language teaching to ensure equitable access to English language education for all learners.

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