

# Overview of Oral English Pedagogy and Teachers' Technological Competence in Integrating Technology in Oral English: A Case of Juaben Senior High School in Ghana

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## ABSTRACT

The research explores an overview of Oral English pedagogy and teachers' technological competence in integrating technology in oral English pedagogy. Conducted at Juaben Senior High in Ghana, the study delves into various aspects, including identifying and describing the manner in which Oral English is currently taught, and assessing teachers' level of technological competency which would enable them to integrate technology in Oral English pedagogy. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework and the SAMR Model (Substitution, Augment, Modification, Redefinition) are the theoretical frameworks of the study. The research employed a mixed-method and data was gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and observations. The study included a sample of 100 students and 11 teachers. The findings of the study showed that Oral English is currently taught in schools with textbooks. The study also projected that English teachers need to be trained to help them integrate technology in their pedagogy. The study will help improve the academic performance of students in oral English, and further studies should explore the perceptions of English language instructors towards integrating technology into oral English pedagogy.

**Keywords:** Technology, Oral English, Pedagogy, Teachers

## INTRODUCTION

It is crucial to highlight that education's objective is to achieve academic success. To achieve this mild stone of academic success, there should be the right school setting together with high quality curriculum and instruction (Robinson-Madden, 2021). The academic performance of students in Oral English has always been questionable due to the poor performance in the subject mentioned, and this calls for the appropriate measures to be put in place to help curb or minimize the poor performance of students in the subject. It is common these days to see technology at the forefront of education playing a prominent role as it helps students learn more efficiently and track their progress (Haleem, Javaid, and Qadri 2022). Integration of technology in Oral English pedagogy at Juaben Senior High School will help improve students' performance in the subject.

To improve the academic performance of students in Oral English, there is the need to fuse technology in

the pedagogy so that it will contribute to enhancing students' academic performance in the subject. This study sheds light on the methods of teaching Oral English in Ghanaian Senior High schools. Again, it takes a critical look at teachers' level of technological competence which would enable them to integrate technology into oral English pedagogy.

## Background

Language acquisition is an ongoing, dynamic process that commences at birth and persists throughout one's life. Students acquire language by utilizing it to express their ideas, emotions, and interactions within their families, social circles, and the broader community. English, a West Germanic language belonging to the Indo-European language family, has its roots in the early medieval inhabitants of England according to Watkins (2011), and it has gradually become a lingua franca in most parts of the world without Ghana being an exception. Adika (2012) traces the evolution of the English language from its inception in the 16th century up to the present day. In Ghana, English serves as the primary language of instruction, and it is widely acknowledged that speaking is one of the most intricate and challenging skills to acquire in a second language (Tarone, 2005). This therefore makes oral English a "hard nut to crack" for most Ghanaian Senior High School students.

The English language as a communication tool for transmitting and receiving information cannot be overlooked with this in mind. For information flow, the only way by which an effective interaction can go on is speaking (oral) and listening (audio), as well as the "look and say method." The use of verbal cues and gestures is equally important.

Of paramount significance, Oral English, a component of the English language paper in the final examination of secondary educational institutions focuses on communication and serves to convey knowledge, concepts, and emotions through spoken words (Asemanyi, 2015). Cultivating oral language proficiency involves nurturing the abilities and understanding involved in both listening and speaking. Moats (2010) identified five fundamental elements of oral language, encompassing phonological skills, pragmatics, syntax, morphological skills, and vocabulary. The Oral English is a forty-five-minute test captured in the English language West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). This paper's primary aim is to assess a candidate's grasp of Oral English or their capability to effectively converse in the language. In general, there has been a consistent trend of candidates achieving low scores in the English language, and about 45% of the candidates failed in the English language during the 2021 WASSCE examination (Albert, 2021).

Oral English has become an embodiment for effective communication. It is the beginning stage of speech articulation through sounds, such as intonations (stressed and unstressed), transcriptions and phonemes. This affirms the notion that accent and dialect of the language are highly receptive to the English language. From a linguistic perspective, an accent encompasses a socially significant array of phonetic attributes. Distinctions in accents, for instance, can arise from factors such as the length of final consonant sounds, vowel duration, pause patterns, and the degree of diphthongization (Levis & Zhou, 2017). Accents refer to the various manners in which a language is enunciated, whether by native or non-native speakers (Levis & Zhou, 2017). Moreover, even among native speakers, diverse regions can exhibit distinctive accents. In contrast, dialect pertains to the amalgamation of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation that constitute a single language. The integration of technology has thus become a necessary tool for oral language pedagogy. The world in a gradual process has now become a global village with technology being at the forefront, and integrating technology into Oral English pedagogy can help improve students' performance in speaking, listening and fluency in the language. Technology has found its way or gradually been integrated into the educational sector to make teaching and learning easy for both students and teachers. The incorporation of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) into education involves the utilization of computer-based communication tools within the regular instructional activities in the classroom.

Technology should therefore be integrated into Oral English pedagogy to make teaching and learning easy just as the other subject areas of study.

### **Research Objectives**

The specific objectives of the study are;

1. To identify and describe the manner in which Oral English is currently taught in the Senior High Schools.
2. To assess teachers' level of technological competency which would enable them to integrate technology in their Oral English pedagogy.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the research questions of the study;

1. In which manner is Oral English currently taught in Senior High Schools?
2. What is the teachers' level of competency in integrating technology into their Oral English pedagogy?

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical foundation drew inspiration from the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, initially proposed by Koehler and Mishra (2006), and the SAMR Model (Substitution, Augment, Modification, Redefinition) developed by Dr. Ruben Puentedura (Puentedura, 2014).

In accordance with the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework introduced by Koehler and Mishra (2006), the incorporation of technology into a specific subject rests upon three distinct knowledge domains: Technological Knowledge (TK), Content Knowledge (CK), and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK). Technological Knowledge (TK) primarily involves comprehending the functions and practical applications of existing technological tools and devices (Schmidt, Baran, & Thompson, 2009). So, in integrating technology into oral English pedagogy, teachers need to have a basic understanding on the technological gadgets to be used. It has been realised that a lot of teachers keep questioning educational technology by seeing it to cause more harm than good to students (Heick, 2022), and this archaic ideology is preventing teachers to develop interest in the use of technology to be conversant with some needed technological gadgets that will help in integrating technology in the delivery of oral English. Content Knowledge (CK) on the other hand refers to the facts, concepts, theories, and principles that are taught and learned in specific academic courses. So, the course content or learning outcomes of oral English that teachers hope students do understand at the end of a course is what is termed Content Knowledge. Foster (2020) described subject content knowledge as the amount and organization of knowledge teachers have about the subject they handle, and Pedagogical Knowledge (PK) refers to the specialised knowledge of teachers for creating effective teaching and learning environments for all students (Schmidt et al., 2019)

The SAMR Model (Substitution, Augment, Modification, Redefinition) developed by Dr. Ruben Puentedura explains the increasing impact of the integration of technology in a pedagogical delivery. This extends from replacing conventional learning techniques, like pen-and-paper writing, to devising entirely novel learning approaches, such as students incorporating technology or electronic learning into their daily classroom routines. The SAMR Model is an acronym for Substitution, Augment, Modification, and Redefinition Model. In applying this model with the aim of integrating technology in Oral English pedagogy, the

“Substitution” will replace or substitute traditional task with technological task to make teaching and learning more student centred, and a significant attribute of the substitution phase is that technology serves as a direct replacement for tools without offering any functional enhancement. The “Augmentation” phase comes into play when students begin employing certain technological applications (apps), websites, and computer programs. An example is the Zoom and Google Meet platforms used by distance learning students. A common feature of this stage is that technology acts as a direct tool substitute with functional improvement. Multiple approaches are found to instruction at the “Modification” stage, and a common feature is that technology allows new product or products to be created, as well as improves efficiency. Students ask questions bothering them at this stage and find the needed response. “Redefinition” is the last stage of this model, and students have the needed control of learning at this stage. A common feature is that learning activities are designed in ways that would not be possible to accomplish without technology, and the continuous usage of technology will help students get more hands-on experience and improve their performance in the long run.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Integration of Technology in the Ghanaian Education System

Technology over the years has proven to be an effective teaching and learning tool as it can help strengthen the relationship between teachers and students by adopting learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners. Integration of technology in education has therefore been on high demand in many developed and developing nations (Knezek, 2008). Ghana’s interest in inculcating technology in the Ghanaian education began not long ago. It was formally introduced as part of the educational reforms which happened in the year 2007 which later led to the ICT in education policy in the year 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2009). The aim was to ensure that all students from the basic level of education in Ghana acquire basic ICT literacy skills that can be applied in their everyday life activities aside the school related activities (CRDD, 2007). Though ICT education has been part of the Ghanaian education for more than a decade now, the nation together with some Sub-Sahara African countries is still lagging in technological education, but the effort from the Ghanaian government is gradually putting the nation ahead of other African countries in ICT or technology education. In the International ICT Development Index, Ghana was ranked 120<sup>th</sup> globally and 11<sup>th</sup> in Africa in the year 2016, and by the year 2020, the nation had risen to 101<sup>st</sup> globally and 5<sup>th</sup> in Africa all thanks to the effort made by the government (Oxford Business Group, 2020). Some factors observed to be limiting the growth of ICT education in Ghana include the lack of internet access, electricity and power problems, inadequate computers in schools, teachers’ inadequate knowledge or technical know-how and many others (Soma, 2021). The investment of the Ghanaian government in ICT education over the years is still being felt as the nation is gradually going digital with most of its national policies with the help of the vice president Mahamadu Bawumia (Benjamin, 2020).

### The Link Between Technology and Oral English as a Subject

The speaking dimension of the Queen’s Language, also known as English, emphasizes the importance of Oral English. This component represents the spoken facet of a language. English is the most widely spoken language globally, boasting over 1,132 million speakers, followed by Mandarin with over 1,117 million speakers (Patel & Jain, 2008). This makes English the world’s lingua franca. As technology continues to simplify human tasks, a plethora of resources delve into the correlation between technology and language learning. Teaching English language to Ghanaian students for instance demands a lot of innovative approaches to improve student understanding as it is not the mother tongue of the average Ghanaian student. Many existing materials have proven the integration of technology to help in language learning. As per Omidvar (2014), technological resources such as the internet, podcasts, video conferencing, videos, and speech recognition software are acknowledged as highly effective tools for instructing speaking skills. The

utilization of these tools is seen to aid students in enhancing their language proficiency. It seems the traditional method of imparting language skills or knowledge into students has not achieved its intended purpose over the years, and these mediums have become an additional tool for enhancing the teaching competence of students. Most video computerized applications help more in language learning as students can see and hear their instructors clearly to repeat after them where possible. Digital storytelling stands as a potent technological resource for fostering speaking skills, as it merges computer technologies with the art of storytelling, incorporating elements like texts, images, and audio. Its implementation in the classroom has substantially bolstered students' English-speaking abilities, enabling them to narrate stories in their own words and voices (Suppasetsee, 2013).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted the descriptive case study approach fused within a mixed method (qualitative and quantitative) to find the needed answers to the research questions. Questionnaires, interviews, and observations were used to gather the needed data from respondents.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process involved both primary and secondary sources. For primary data, all students and English teachers at Juaben Senior High School in the Ashanti Region of Ghana were targeted. The primary tool for obtaining most of the information was a questionnaire, which was thoughtfully crafted with a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions. Interviews and observations were also used in collecting the primary data, and secondary data were extracted from chosen books, journals, internet resources, and relevant pamphlets on the topic under investigation.

### **Semi-Structured Questionnaire Content for Teachers and Students**

1. How is oral English currently taught?
2. What do you think about how oral English is currently taught in your school?
3. Are you conversant with the usage of ICT tools or technological gadgets?
4. Rating teachers' technological competence to integrate technology in oral English pedagogy.

### **Procedure for Semi-Structured Interview**

The interviews were conducted and recorded using a mobile or cell phone recorder. The interviews commenced with open-ended inquiries aimed at exploring participants' perspectives on the underlying causes of poor oral English performance. Each interview lasted for 10 to 15 minutes, and the interview questions were as follows;

1. How is oral English currently taught in your school?
2. Which technological tools or gadgets can be used for the teaching of oral English?
3. Rating teachers' technological competence to integrate technology in oral English pedagogy.
4. Which appropriate technology can help in the teaching of oral English?



## Sampling Technique/Sampling Frame

The researcher employed both Simple Random Sampling (SRS) and Purposive Sampling (PS) techniques for sample selection. Simple random sampling was employed to choose student respondents due to their considerable numbers, aiming to ensure equal representation of males and females within the strata. The purposive sampling was also employed in selecting the teacher respondents. This sampling technique selected the respondents for the purpose of the study, and only English Language teachers at the Juaben Senior High School were purposely sampled or selected for the study.

A sample frame was formulated to serve as the basis for enlisting participants, and this frame was guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework of the study. The utilization of a sample frame is particularly pertinent when generating a sample from a group that may not be identifiable through official statistics. In other to make the study for the researcher, an institutional map was drawn up, and students at the Juaben Senior High School were interviewed.

Table 1. Institutional Map

|                                  |
|----------------------------------|
| Respondents                      |
| 1. Agricultural Science students |
| 2. General Science               |
| 3. General Arts                  |
| 4. Visual Arts                   |
| 5. Home Economics                |
| 6. Business                      |

Table 2. List of Institutions and the Participants Interviewed.

| Courses                          | Number of Participants |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Agricultural Science Students | 30                     |
| 2. General Science               | 20                     |
| 3. General Arts                  | 15                     |
| 4. Visual Arts                   | 15                     |
| 5. Home Economics                | 10                     |
| 6. Business                      | 10                     |
| 7. English Teachers              | 11                     |
| 8. Total                         | 111                    |

## Validity and Reliability

Expert judgement enhanced the validity of the research instruments, and test-retest method was used to assess the reliability of the questionnaire. Questionnaire was administered to the respondents for the first time, and the researcher ensured that the administration process was standardized to minimize potential sources of error. Time interval was considered by the researcher, and it was followed by a second administration of the same set of questionnaires to the same participants under similar conditions as the

initial administration. Once responses from both administrations were collected, the researchers used Pearson Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ) to calculate the reliability coefficient of the questionnaire items. The resultant ( $r$ ) of 0.80 indicates that the questionnaires are reliable.

### **Ethical Consideration**

Numerous ethical considerations were thoroughly addressed, given that human participants were involved in the interview phase. The researcher diligently upheld ethical principles throughout the study. An informed consent form was presented to each participant before the interview, safeguarding the rights of both the researcher and the interviewees. Ahead of the interview process, an introductory letter and informed consent forms were dispatched to the school and all participants involved, employing methods such as emails and in-person deliveries. All participants qualified to act as respondents to the study even though majority of them were less than eighteen years as students of second cycle institution or secondary school. The respondents below the age of eighteen sought a written consent form from their parents to support the ethical consideration of the research.

## **RESULTS**

### **Analysis of Research Findings**

**Findings for Objective 1:** The manner with which oral English is currently taught in Senior High Schools.

#### **How Oral English is Currently Taught in Senior High Schools:**

The student respondents confirmed in the interviewing session that the teachers focus more on the use of printed materials or textbooks in the facilitation of oral English. Students are taught the sounds, and technicalities in oral English by using textbooks. Occasionally, a specific day is set aside for a practical session which is deemed not to be effective by most of the student respondents. Per description of the student respondents during the interview, the practical session is only for the conduct of test or examination where questions are played to the hearing of students with the aid of speakers and computers for students to select the right answer from a list of alternative options. The same thing was observed by the researcher who is also an English Teacher at the Juaben Senior High School in Kumasi.

The researcher furthermore observed that students are dissatisfied with the current method of teaching oral English at the school. They believe that the emphasis on printed materials or textbooks is not producing the desired results. Furthermore, the limited incorporation of technology is primarily for testing or examination purposes rather than instructional use. According to the student respondents, an approach that incorporates audio-lingualism would be more beneficial for improving students' ability to identify and pronounce sounds accurately in oral English. Audio-lingualism is a method of foreign language teaching which focuses on the learning of grammatical and phonological structure, especially for speaking and listening.

Data essential for the study was gathered from secondary sources concerning the incorporation of technology in oral English instruction. Dos Santos et al., (2019) outlined effective methodologies for integrating technology into English pedagogy. Additionally, Tamilarasan (2019) also provided a comprehensive analysis of technology integration in English language instruction.

**Findings for Objective 2:** Teachers Level of Technological Competence which would enable them integrate technology in their oral English pedagogy.

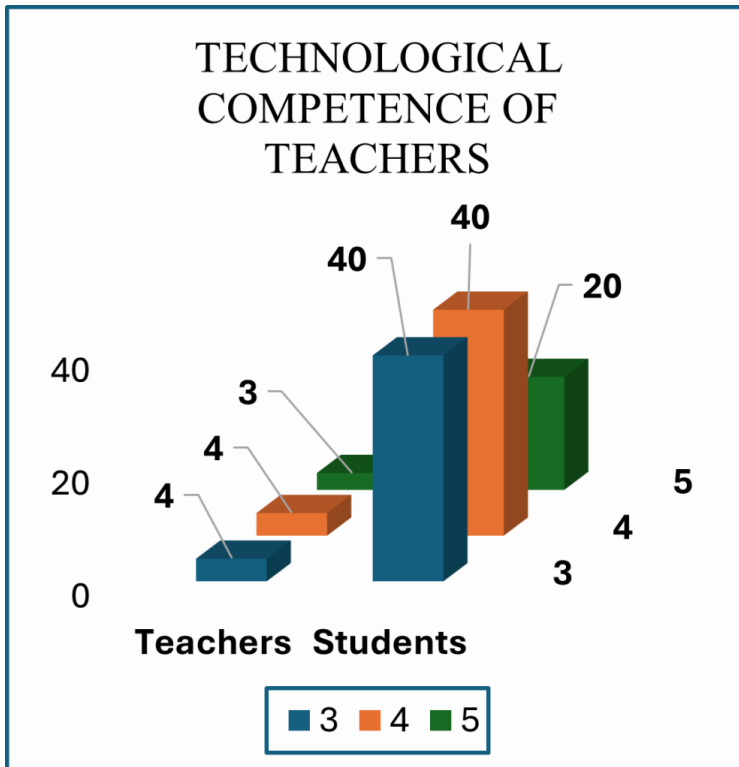


Figure 1. Technological Competence of Teachers.

Source: Author's Field Work, June 2023

On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, teachers were asked to rate their technological competence which would enable them to integrate technology in their oral English pedagogy. Students were also asked to rate their perceived technological competence of the teacher respondents to help determine how best they can integrate technology into oral English pedagogy.

From Figure 1, both teacher and student respondents gave a rating of 3, 4, and 5. 4 of the teacher respondents representing 36.36% rated themselves 3 out of 5 regarding their level of technological competence to integrate technology in oral English pedagogy. The same number of teacher respondents (36.36%) also rated themselves 4 out of 5, and the remaining 3 teacher respondents representing 27.27% rated themselves 5 out of 5 regarding their technological competence to integrate technology in their oral English pedagogy. 40% of the student respondents rated the technological competence of their English teachers at 3 out of 5, another 40% rated them at 3 out of 5, and the remaining 20% rated their teachers at 5 out of 5.

Clearly, it was observed by the researcher that the teachers warmly embrace the integration of technology in oral English, but their technical or technological capabilities are not at their maximum. The teachers need to build their capacity to integrate technology in their oral English pedagogy through a series of technological training programs. The student respondents had the same comment about their teachers during the interviewing session, and the teacher respondents described “teacher training” as a challenge in the discharge of their duties as it happens occasionally.

Secondary data supports the observation made by the researcher and teachers' interview responses on the integration of technology in oral English pedagogy by teachers. The study of Ahmed (2020) from Yemen revealed the positive attitude of English teachers towards the integration of technology in English language teaching. Irrespective of the fact that teachers from Yemen used as a case study had a positive attitude



towards technology integration, they did not make use of technology in their English Language instruction.

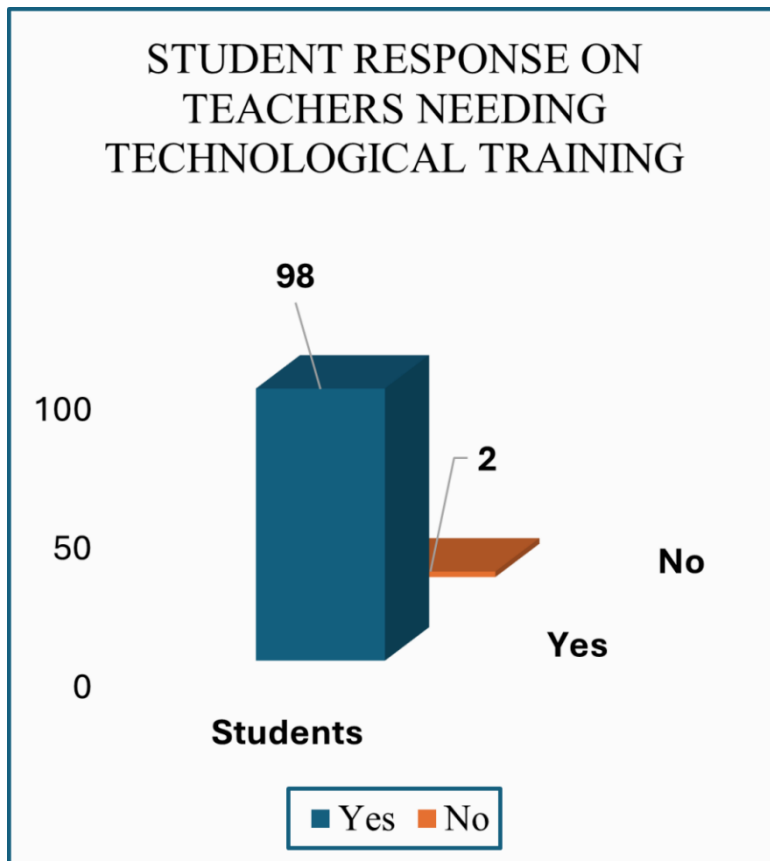


Figure 2. Student Response on Capacity Building for Teachers to Integrate Technology in their Oral English Pedagogy

Source: Author's Field Work, June 2023

The student respondents in an interview and survey response confirmed positively the researcher's observation advocating for the implementation of a technological training program for English teachers. Despite the English teachers' confidence in their ability to integrate technology into oral English pedagogy, 98% of the surveyed students believe that their teachers should undergo training programs to enhance their capacity in integrating technology into oral English instruction.

During the interview session, it was revealed that one female teacher shows little interest in incorporating technology into her teaching methods. However, considering she represents only one out of eleven teachers, her reluctance does not pose a significant issue, especially as the majority favour integrating technology into oral English pedagogy. The challenge is that most teachers supporting the integration of technology in oral English pedagogy are not competent to make it happen. Opeifa (2022) for instance concludes that teachers generally hold a positive attitude towards utilizing technology in oral English instruction.

## DISCUSSIONS

Investigations into how oral English is currently taught in Juaben Senior High School revealed that English teachers mostly rely on printed materials and textbooks for facilitation. However, it is stated in the reviewed literature that integration of technological resources such as the internet, podcasts, video conferencing, videos, and speech recognition software are acknowledged as highly effective tools for instructing speaking skills (Omidvar, 2014). Tamilarasan, Anitha, and Saravanan (2019) also speak on technology integration as

a way to help students understand the oral aspect of English language. This relates directly to the SAMR Model which emphasizes on the impact of integrating technology into oral English pedagogy.

In looking at teachers' level of technological competency which would enable them to integrate technology in their oral English pedagogy, the study clearly highlights the fact that teachers need to build their capacity to help make the integration effective. The literature review projects that teachers' inadequate knowledge or technical know-how are some observed factors limiting the integration of technology in oral English pedagogy, and the Ghanaian education at large (Soma, 2021). Opeifa (2022) in his study concluded that teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of technology in teaching oral English. This positive attitude of teachers together with frequent technological training will lead to a positive impact on students' performance in oral English. This gives credence to the Technological Knowledge of the TPAC framework which forms part of the theoretical framework of the study. Technological knowledge refers to a person's understanding of the various functions and operations of a technological gadget.

## **SUMMARY OF THE STUDY**

The research focused on the overview of oral English pedagogy, and teachers' technological competence in integrating technology into oral English pedagogy. A mixed-method approach was utilized, involving the use of semi-structured questionnaires to gather data from the selected participants of the study. The data was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed by means of appropriate statistical models. The qualitative data was collected on all areas of the study which include; identifying and describing the manner in which oral English is currently taught in the school, and accessing teachers' level of technological competency which would enable them to integrate technology in their Oral English pedagogy.

Investigation on how Oral English is currently taught in Senior High Schools revealed that teachers mostly rely on printed materials or books to facilitate oral English as a subject. The study found out that more is needed aside printed materials or books in effective facilitation of Oral English, and they include computers, speakers, projectors, sound recorders, and many others. The nonexistence of these technological devices has resulted in students being unable to participate in any practical sessions during the teaching and learning of Oral English.

Among the study's discoveries, majority of the teachers possess an appreciable level of technological competence which positions them to incorporate technology into the teaching of Oral English. Moreover, they require a certain level of training to help them incorporate it effectively.

## **CONCLUSION**

Drawing upon the study's discussion and findings, the following conclusions were formulated:

The current method of teaching Oral English in Senior High School warrants revision. English teachers heavily lean on textbooks and printed materials, yet this approach has not shown positive outcomes thus far. Introducing technology into Oral English instruction can potentially alter this trend and improve students' academic performance.

It can also be inferred that English teachers who play a pivotal role in facilitating Oral English, must possess technological proficiency to effectively integrate technology into the pedagogical approach. Additionally, teachers at Juaben Senior High School should undergo regular training sessions to enhance their competence in integrating technology into the instruction of Oral English.

Potential limitations that could affect the reliability and generalizability of the findings include the fact that

study has a small sample size which only focuses on the students and English teachers at the Juaben Senior High School in Ghana. Furthermore, the occurrence of sampling bias may be another limiting factor to the study.

## RECOMMENDATION

Having summarized the study, outlined its findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are now provided. These recommendations are aimed at fostering the integration of technology into Oral English pedagogy and the broader educational system.

The Ghana Education Service (GES) and relevant governing bodies overseeing Senior High School education should formulate a comprehensive policy for the instruction of oral English in educational institutions. This policy should advocate for the integration of technology in the teaching of oral English, with the aim of enhancing students' academic performance in this subject. Historically, student performance in Oral English has been subpar.

Again, institutions should allocate funds or set aside some source of funding to train teachers on regular basis to help build their level of competence in the use of technology which would enable them to integrate technology in their Oral English pedagogy.

Further research should consider exploring the perceptions of English language instructors towards integrating technology into oral English pedagogy.

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