



An Examination of the Speaking Exercises in the 11th Grade English Textbook According to the 21st Century Skills

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Abstract

Well-written textbooks help teachers organize their lessons and inspire students affecting their destinies and guide them through linguistic, cultural, and communicative complexities. Fluency in a language and global relationships are fostered and as a result, 21st-century talents empower students to be adaptive architects of tomorrow's innovations, competent at navigating the changing terrains of education, job, and living with adaptation, ingenuity, and collaboration. This study examines how the “Spice Up” textbook for 11th-graders in Turkish public schools incorporates 21st-century skills through its speaking activities. The multidimensional character of 21st-century abilities and implicit links between these activities and their outcomes are examined within this study. The qualitative study uses document analysis to get data from the textbook. The findings obtained show that 11th-grade textbook speaking tasks largely match 21st-century skills. Communication is stressed most in the activities, whereas technology use is least.

Key words: Speaking Exercises, 11th grade English Textbook, 21st Century Skills

Introduction

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English is required in our national curriculum and recognized as a foreign language by educational authorities worldwide due to its vast influence and essential significance in cultural, scientific, and technical fields (Rao, 2019). Thus, it is now part of global educational systems and it is compulsory to know English. Due to its great importance there are many studies and research in the field of English Language Teaching.

Information, skills, and competences have changed rapidly in the 21st century, requiring people to adapt and overcome obstacles. These conditions make "21st Century Skills" essential for professional success and adaptability to political, social, and global changes (Silva, 2009). Modern living requires new skills to solve complex challenges and seize opportunities (Binkley et al., 2012) and several studies emphasize the importance of 21st-century skills in current life. Companies value technical proficiency, flexibility, teamwork, and critical thinking in a changing employment market. For entrepreneurs negotiating possibilities and starting businesses, these abilities boost productivity, creativity, and work satisfaction (Rotherham & Willingham, 2010). 21st-century skills are essential to education, thus textbooks should be designed in accordance with these skills to maximize their impact.

Current educational discourse emphasizes 21st-century skills, calling for a new generation of students and professionals with independent thinking, problem solving, and informed decision-making to match changing work demands. In addition to teaching fundamentals, textbooks should include critical thinking and reasoning, which are increasingly important. The 11th-grade English textbook "Spice Up" was launched in 2023-2024, making it difficult to determine if its speaking assignments match 21st-century skills as it is a new textbook. Thus, this study examines the speaking activities of 11th-grade English textbooks for 21st-century abilities, identifying strengths and flaws to integrate them into English language education, enriching foreign language teaching resources and providing ideas for educators using this textbook to improve students' foreign language competency.

This study has two main research questions. These are:

1. What is the connection between 11th-grade English textbook speaking objectives and 21st-century skills?
2. In what ways do 11th-grade English textbook speaking activities develop 21st-century skills?

Studies and publications show that 21st-century success requires life, profession, and education. Educational discourse prioritizes "21st-century skills" because students need more than academic knowledge to succeed in a changing world since rapid technological breakthroughs and worldwide workforce transformations require major educational paradigm shifts (Ataberk, 2022). 21st-century skills include a range of skills needed for success in modern and future cultures, with the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21) framework being one of the most extensively used. Teamwork, critical thinking, communication, and innovation are P21 priorities (Egan et al., 2017). Collaboration helps teams and businesses solve problems, but critical thinking requires assessing facts, evidence, and judgement. Effective communication uses many media to transmit ideas and information, whereas creativity fosters innovation and creative problem solving (Geisinger, 2016).

Integration of 21st-century abilities into language instruction has grown. Language learners should utilize P21's teamwork, critical thinking, communication, and creativity (Bygate, 2016). Language education programmes are progressively teaching these skills to help students communicate, cooperate, and critically analyse intercultural difficulties, according to Council of Europe (2018) reports. Communicative competency and task-based learning are crucial in 21st-century language education. The emphasis on real language use has replaced grammar-focused methods (Ellis, 2017). Communicative language instruction methods including real materials, role-plays, and project-based activities improve oral and written communication, critical thinking, and collaboration.

Technology has changed language training in the 21st century. Immersive content, interactive exercises, and virtual language communities have revolutionized language learning, providing student autonomy, personalized instruction, and real-world language application (Godwin-Jones, 2018) and technology integration into language education requires careful pedagogical design and teacher training to be effective. (Warschauer, 2017).

Another significant point that should be considered is that multilingualism is becoming a cornerstone of modern language training due to globalization and greater cross-country relationships enabled by shared values, increased travel, and intensified migration. Baker (2011) states that multilingualism improves communication, cognitive flexibility, and cultural awareness, creating 21st-century global citizens who can communicate across cultures.

According to Baker (2011), 21st-century language education emphasizes plurilingualism, technology integration, communicative competence, and 21st-century abilities.

Many researchers have examined textbooks from different angles, providing complete insights on instructional materials. Rinekso (2021) examined a 7th-grade Indonesian EFL textbook's 21st-century abilities. Content analysis revealed 12 of 15 abilities, focusing on communication and teamwork. Global awareness and digital literacy were lacking. Rakhmawati and Priyana (2019) used checklists to identify and analyse 21st-century abilities in an English textbook. They found 11 integrated abilities, including critical thinking, communication, and teamwork, that might inform textbook production. Bouzid (2016) evaluated 21st-century skills exercises in three Moroccan public high school ELT textbooks. ICT-related activities, creativity, and career and life skills were lacking, suggesting textbook content should be updated to meet 21st-century needs. Atıcı (2023) examined the compatibility of the Turkish Ministry of National Education's 9th-grade English coursebook with 21st-century abilities, namely the Teenwise Student's Book content. The study found 21st-century skills in the coursebook, especially productive ones above receptive ones. Communication and collaboration were prioritized, but leadership and accountability might be improved. Atıcı emphasized the need to integrate 21st-century abilities into the 9th-grade English Coursebook, promoting different activities for skill development.

Methodology

This study examined the 11th-grade English textbook "Spice Up" using qualitative research and document analysis to assess its teaching potential. Document analysis, a sophisticated research tool that can analyse textual, visual, and audio data, was essential for this study's analysis. To assess the textbook's 21st-century skill education in 11th-grade English, the study assessed its components and organization.

This research examined the "Spice Up" textbook using the printed version of it. The MoNE "Spice Up" textbook for 11th-grade English language learners offers speaking, listening, reading, and writing tasks with various themes and linguistic skills. This study investigated how effectively each activity promoted creativity, critical thinking, communication, cooperation, information management, technology usage, career and life skills, and cultural

awareness. The research used a checklist to assure analytical consistency and impartiality throughout evaluation. The research used the criteria in Table 1 determined by P21 Classification to evaluate the textbook's speech exercises and the English course's speaking objectives for 21st-century abilities.

Table 1. Checklist

21 st century skills	Number of activities
Creativity and Innovation	
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	
Communication	
Collaboration	
Information Management	
Effective Use of Technology	
Career and Life Skills	
Cultural Awareness	

Explanation of each item in the checklist used in the research is important for this study. "Creativity and Innovation" distinguishes between developing new ideas and using them to advance in the 21st century. The activities related to this 21st century skill help students generate new ideas and use them to advance. "Critical Thinking and Problem Solving" examines modern solutions and analyses data to draw conclusions. The activities related to this 21st century skill encourage creativity and critical thinking to solve problems. "Communication" skill and the activities related to this 21st century skill help people understand, cooperate, and connect by sharing ideas and information. The sub-skill "Collaboration" emphasizes various teams sharing talents, ideas, and perspectives to achieve goals and create new ones. Through the activities related to this 21st century skill students collaborate to achieve goals. "Information Management" involves gathering, analyzing, organizing, and using large amounts of data to make decisions and set goals. The activities related to this 21st century skill teach information management principles and applications

and the practices develop information management abilities. "Effective Use of Technology" improves productivity, cooperation, creativity, and problem solving by using digital tools and platforms. While none of the speaking exercises openly promote digital technologies, several touch on technology might inspire. "Career and Life Skills" include flexibility, resilience, emotional intelligence, and lifelong learning for personal and professional progress. The activities related to this 21st century skill build abilities for professional and personal issues. "Cultural Awareness" promotes understanding, identifying, and accepting various cultural ideas to promote worldwide collaboration. The activities related to this 21st century skill promote cultural awareness and sensitivity in students, which improves worldwide collaboration and understanding.

Through the analysis step the researcher and another colleague initially examined textbook speaking practices using the checklist. Two raters examined the data to understand speaking actions and 21st-century abilities. This enhanced inter-rater analytical reliability. Detailed examination showed the intricacy of each speaking activity. The checklist evenly and objectively collected data and the data collected were analyzed through descriptive analysis. Data on 21st-century skill activity frequency and distribution were categorized and organized using the checklist. Qualitative evaluations analyzed how successfully speaking activities addressed capabilities.

Findings

The Alignment of the 21st Century Skills with the Speaking Objectives of 11th Grade Curriculum

The Grade 11 English speaking objectives reveal a fascinating mixture of abilities to develop students' language and cognitive skills. This research explores the underlying links between these goals and the complex 21st-century skills landscape. Figure 1 shows the Ministry of National Education's carefully crafted Grade 11 English Course speaking objectives for 2023–2024.

2023-2024 SPEAKING OBJECTIVES OF ENGLISH COURSE

- E11.1.S1. Students will be able to talk about future plans and predictions.
- E11.1.S2. Students will be able to make an appointment on the phone.
- E11.2.S1. Students will be able to take part in a dialogue about likes, dislikes, interests and preferences.
- E11.2.S2. Students will be able to ask and answer questions about their present and past abilities.
- E11.3.S1. Students will be able to talk about past habits.
- E11.3.S2. Students will be able to talk about a personal experience in the past.
- E11.4.S1. Students will be able to share their personal experiences in the past.
- E11.4.S2. Students will be able to describe places, people and events in the past.
- E11.5.S1. Students will be able to talk about their regrets and wishes about past events.
- E11.5.S2. Students will be able to ask and answer questions about unreal past events.
- E11.6.S1. Students will be able to criticize an action in the past.
- E11.6.S2. Students will be able to express their inferences from the results of events in the past.
- E11.7.S1. Students will be able to give a presentation on a monument or historical site.
- E11.7.S2. Students will be able to interview with a friend to get detailed information about places he/she has visited.
- E11.8.S1. Students will be able to exchange opinions about outdoor/extreme sports.
- E11.8.S2. Students will be able to ask questions to make an interview with a sportsperson.
- E11.9.S1. Students will be able to ask and answer questions to clarify a well-known / common person or a place.
- E11.10.S1. Students will be able to exchange ideas about values and practices.
- E11.10.S2. Students will be able to make comments about moral values and norms in different cultures.

Figure 1. 11th grade English Course speaking objectives

The followings were found when these objectives were compared to 21st-century skills:

Creativity and Innovation: The speaking objectives “E11.1.S1 and E11.10.S2” align with the skill, creativity and innovation. Objective E11.1.S1 encourages students to debate future ideas and forecasts, which stimulates creative problem solving. There are few open-ended activities that expressly encourage original thinking among speaking objectives. Activities

that promote experimentation, debate of new methods, and alternate results may boost creativity and innovation.

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Several speaking objectives emphasize critical thinking and problem solving. E11.3.S1 and E11.5.S2 (discussing past actions and unreal past occurrences) help students to assess circumstances, develop logical deductions, and evaluate other views. These activities encourage students to investigate causes, effects, and alternate perspectives, but a lack of clear assignments testing assumptions or assessing information dependability hinders critical thinking across all objectives.

Communication: Speaking objectives emphasize students' communication skills. The objectives E11.1.S2 (setting telephone appointments) and E11.7.S1 (presenting about a monument or historical site) provide different speech expression and communication practice. Students practise multiple communication styles, articulation, and fluency through these objectives. Communication abilities develop differently across objectives according to task complexity and depth. Some goals offer complex communication settings, while others may hamper skill development.

Collaboration: Speaking aims entail couple or group interactions that promote collaboration (E11.1.S2, E11.2.S1, E11.2.S2, E11.7.S2, E11.8.S1). These goals emphasize collaboration yet have restrictions. Making telephone appointments (E11.1.S2) or discussing interests and preferences (E11.2.S1) include interaction but do not require mutual decision-making or problem solving, which might improve collaboration skills.

Information Management: Speaking objectives include little information management skills. Interviewing an athlete in E11.8.S2 might benefit from technology-assisted activities or information synthesis. Such initiatives can teach students information management skills needed for academic and professional success.

Effective Use of Technology: Speaking objectives show minimal technology integration. Technology-based activities like multimedia presentations and internet research may enhance learning and teach students essential academic and professional skills.

Career and Life Skills: Speaking goals mention job and life skills. Discussions on values and norms (E11.10.S1) and interviews (E11.7.S2) teach professional communication and culture. Practical life skills, negotiation, and conflict resolution may better prepare students for real-world situations.

Cultural Awareness: Speaking aims successfully raise cultural awareness. Discussions on cultures, historical landmarks, and morality (E11.7.S2, E11.10.S2) improve students' cultural awareness. Activities that highlight multiple viewpoints, cultures, and histories promote cultural appreciation.

The speaking objectives show some 21st-century abilities, but they may improve in information management and technological usage. Enhancing these alignments can provide children a complete set of 21st-century abilities for school and work.

Findings Related to the Alignment of the 21st Century Skills with the Speaking Activities in the Textbook

Grade 11 textbook “Spice Up” has 91 speaking exercises to improve language skills. These speaking tasks include pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-listening, post-reading, and post-listening. The activities include easy one-question replies and more complex challenges. They support whole-class, individual, pair, and group work. Dynamic exercises like role-plays and speech preparations enhance learning. Activities also accommodate different learning styles, guaranteeing interest, understanding, and application.

This study compared these activities' content and arrangement to 21st-century competencies. Each activity carefully examined creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, information management, effective use of technology, career and life skills and cultural awareness. These exercises are assessed using the checklist of critical 21st-century abilities to determine their integration and alignment with speaking task skills. Table 2 shows how often these skills appear in exercises. Some exercises include more than one 21st-century abilities, while some include none.

Table 2. Frequencies of Speaking Activities in Terms of 21st Century Skills

21 st century skills	Number of activities <i>f</i>
Creativity and Innovation	23
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	51
Communication	88
Collaboration	38
Information Management	11
Effective Use of Technology	3
Career and Life Skills	42
Cultural Awareness	37

Evaluation of Grade 11 English Textbook “Spice Up” speaking activities shows a full integration of 21st-century abilities. Communication dominates 88 activities, emphasizing vocal expression and social connection. Critical thinking and problem solving are emphasized in 51 exercises, followed by 38 collaboration and 37 cultural awareness activities. Additionally, 23 activities foster creativity and innovation. However, effective use of technology with 3 activities and information management with 11 activities are less prevalent, suggesting these speaking exercises should be improved. These activities demonstrate 21st-century speaking skills and growth opportunities.

“Creativity and Innovation” with 23 speaking activities encourage uniqueness and uncommon ideas. Innovative questioning, forward-thinking debates, and collaborative brainstorming sessions can generate new ideas and views. Students can experiment, invent, and break limits with such projects.

“Problem Solving and Critical Thinking” with 51 activities emphasize logic, analysis, and thoroughness. These assignments generally require students to analyse complex circumstances, form logical conclusions, and evaluate opposing views. Students examine causes, consequences, and various information to improve their critical thinking for decision-making and problem solving.

“Communication” with 88 activities emphasize students' respect for linguistic expressiveness, clarity, and fluency. These duties include talks, presentations, and dialogues to express opinions and ideas. These activities improve students' communication abilities, which are essential for academic, professional, and social relationships.

“Collaboration” with 38 speaking exercises emphasize teamwork, cooperation, and problem solving. These activities encourage pair or group decision-making, strategic planning, and problem solving. Students learn active listening, compromise, and dispute resolution through such activities, which are crucial for collaboration and real-world success.

“Information Management” with 11 activities lacks knowledge management abilities, suggesting a weaker priority on organizing, synthesizing, and using information. These activities might use more research-based tasks, technology-integrated assignments, or exercises that help students organize, analyse, and present material. Improved abilities would help students and professionals succeed in information-driven environments.

“Effective Use of Technology” with 3 activities demonstrates a minimal emphasis on technology. Multimedia presentations, internet research, and digital communication platforms can improve students' digital skills.

“Career and Life Skills” with 42 activities engage students in professional communication, cultural understanding, and personal values debates. These exercises teach students practical life skills needed for academic, professional, and personal success by discussing real-world situations, ethical issues, career goals, and social conventions.

“Cultural Awareness” with 37 activities show an interest in other viewpoints, traditions, and customs. These assignments stimulate cultural debates and presentations. An increasingly diversified society requires cultural sensitivity and global understanding for efficient intercultural communication and collaboration. These events encourage cultural diversity and meaningful dialogue.

Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

Conclusion

According to the analyses, the speaking objectives of the Grade 11 English curriculum and textbook activities demonstrate an effective and broad integration of 21st century skills that develop students' language and cognitive skills, and also reveal the strengths and limitations of education in the context of 21st century skills. According to the findings, Grade 11 English speaking targets for 2023-2024 emphasize 21st century skills to different degrees. Communication skills are strengthened through activities such as telephone appointments and presentations. Objectives with critical thinking and problem solving abilities help students assess events, develop logical conclusions, and consider various perspectives. Students' cooperation, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities are also targeted in the objectives. However, information management and technology skills related objectives must be raised and emphasized more.

The Grade 11 textbook "Spice Up" includes pre-reading, pre-writing, pre-listening, post-reading, and post-writing speaking exercises. The exercises range from single-question answers to more complex and productive ones that can be done as a whole class, individual, pair or group. According to the document analysis, communication is the most common 21st century skill included in the speaking activities of the Grade 11 book, followed by critical thinking and problem solving, work and life skills, collaboration, cultural awareness and creativity and innovation. However, there is untapped potential to integrate effective use of technology and information management skills into speaking activities.

Discussion

In accordance with previous research (Egan et al., 2017; Geisinger, 2016), this study emphasizes communication and critical thinking in Grade 11 English speaking objectives and textbook activities. Effective communication and critical thinking are stressed in literature and both the findings of the study and literature (Council of Europe, 2018; Bygate, 2016) emphasize teamwork and cultural sensitivity, which correspond with 21st-century educational goals. Although technology can transform language education (Godwin-Jones, 2018), this

study finds limited technological integration in speaking objectives and activities, indicating a gap between current language learning approaches and technology's potential benefits. Aligning speaking objectives and activities with technology-assisted language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2018) and knowledge synthesis tasks may help close these gaps. Technology-integrated, information-rich activities can improve students' technical and information management skills, but they require strong pedagogical design and teacher training (Warschauer, 2017). The study also suggests insufficient attention on information management abilities, reflecting the worries in the literature about knowledge organisation and synthesis (Warschauer, 2017). Information management should be prioritized in language education to prepare students for knowledge-based jobs. In line with past research, the study emphasizes communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and cultural awareness in language training. However, technology integration and knowledge management limitations indicate improvements and alignment with 21st-century skills frameworks.

The examination of 11th-grade English textbook speaking exercises for 21st-century skills has some limitations. Considering it focuses on the 11th-grade English textbook "Spice Up," this research may overlook other instructional strategies. Judging speaking activities in terms of its alignment with 21st century skills is subjective and compatible, thus researchers and evaluators may interpret them differently. Additionally, teacher training, classroom dynamics, school resources, and student viewpoints are excluded in this study. Only the material of the "Spice Up" textbook may be examined, missing speaking activity implementation and 21st-century skill development. These limitations must be addressed to comprehend the study's findings and plan future research.

Suggestions

Speaking exercises of the 11th grade textbook lack the 21st century skill “the use of technology”, thus textbook speaking activities must incorporate it. One of the ways to achieve this is using language learning applications, interactive platforms, and speech-enhancing multimedia tools improving students' technical abilities. In addition to this specialist teacher training programs must emphasize language education technology integration. Besides, teachers may assign students to gather, evaluate, and present information from multiple sources to close the information management skill gap in speaking activities of the textbook. Students' information management skills can be improved using

research-based projects, information synthesis, and online database discovery related to speaking objectives. In order to achieve this, language teachers need extensive training in innovative instruction, technological integration, and information literacy since assistance and training will help teachers adjust to new technologies. It should be kept in mind that long-term program success depends on monitoring students' language acquisition and 21st-century abilities, including technology integration and information management.

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