

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

Fluency in English is essential for cross-cultural communication, business, education and sharing ideas. However, many English learners struggle to become proficient, especially when it comes to speaking. Despite its crucial role in successful communication, pronunciation, intonation and confidence in speaking sometimes lag behind other language skills such as reading and writing.

Based on the article by Huda & Rahmawati (2024) acquiring speaking skills is more difficult than learning the other three language skills. Therefore, conventional language learning approaches, such as classroom teaching and language exchanges, may not give enough attention to pronunciation and individual speaking practice. In addition, learners' ability to master spoken English can be further hampered by variations in teaching quality and accessibility to native speakers.

In this study, the researcher found that many English education students still experience problems in speaking such as incorrect pronunciation, limited vocabulary and lack of confidence when asked to speak in front of the class. So, in this study the researcher will provide solutions to these problems. The solution provided by the researcher is to introduce an application called ELSA Speak. Researchers will provide support to students facing challenges in speaking to determine the

effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in enhancing their speaking skills.

The efficacy of ELSA Speak comes from its ability to provide methodical strategies to improve students' fluency and pronunciation. Through the use of targeted speech patterns and real-time corrective feedback, the app seeks to accelerate learning and increase students' confidence when speaking English. One of the key advantages of using ELSA Speak is its use of artificial intelligence to deliver personalized learning paths tailored to each user's strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the app offers a wide range of interactive exercises and real-life speaking scenarios that help learners practice in context, making language acquisition more engaging and effective. Its accessibility via smartphones also allows students to practice anytime and anywhere, promoting consistent learning habits outside the classroom.

In the Holy Quran, Allah Almighty says in surah At-Taubah (9:105):

وَقُلْ اَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللّٰهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ۖ وَسَتُرَدُّونَ اِلٰى عِلْمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ۝ ١٠٥

This verse in the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of steadfastness in faith, the responsibility of Muslims towards their religion, and the imperative to strive and sacrifice in the cause of Allah. It underscores the continuous need to enhance one's religious understanding and practice, as well as to improve communication skills, including proficiency in English where necessary for education, work, or other pursuits.

Enhancing English language abilities enables individuals to engage more effectively in today's globalized world, access diverse sources of knowledge and information available in English, and broaden communication with people from varied cultures and backgrounds. In the context of this verse, developing English skills aligns with Muslims' holistic self-improvement efforts, encompassing education and cross-cultural communication.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to remember that the primary message of Surah At-Taubah centers on obedience to Allah, courage in upholding the truth, and dedication to practicing religious teachings faithfully. Improving English proficiency serves as a tool to support these objectives within the broader scope of modern life.

Research has probed deeply into the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak app in improving speaking skills. A pivotal study by Nabila et al. (2024), titled " ELSA Speak as Mobile Assisted Language Learning to Improve Students' Speaking Skill," delved into how the app could elevate students' oral proficiency. The study underscored the importance of integrating technology-driven language learning tools, such as ELSA Speak, into educational frameworks. This integration has proven highly successful in boosting students' speaking abilities and facilitating more impactful language learning experiences.

In a recent investigation titled " Enhancing English Speaking Proficiency in First-Semester Students: The Impact of the Elsa Speak App,"

conducted by Elsani et al. (2023), researchers examined the app's impact on the speaking skills of first-semester students as they embark on their academic journeys. This study provided valuable insights into the foundational aspects of their educational development. The findings highlighted that the ELSA Speak app effectively enhances both fluency and accuracy in English speaking among students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Notably, the app enables autonomous learning through its AI-powered instant feedback mechanism. Furthermore, ELSA Speak has been widely utilized as a research tool in various additional studies, demonstrating its effectiveness and versatility in educational settings.

This research will be conducted in Antasari State Islamic University, more precisely in the English Department. The researcher will select fifth-semester students from local A who exhibit difficulty in speaking as participants in this study. The objective of this study is twofold: first, to measure the effectiveness of the application, and second, to help students improve their speaking skills through the use of the application.

In light of these challenges, researchers are driven to advance this line of inquiry, with the aim of reducing future difficulties through the insights gained from this research. In this vein, the researcher presents this research with the title "Unlocking English Fluency: Maximizing the ELSA Speak App for English Students to Overcome Speaking Barriers."

B. Definition of Key Terms

To avoid misunderstanding or misinterpretation in this thesis, the researcher will explain some of the terms in regard the title as follows:

1. English Fluency

English fluency here leads to the fluency of students in speaking English. Its fluency is seen from the pronunciation of good and correct English vocabulary and mastery of its vocabulary. This fluency is also seen when they present material using English in front of the class with confidence without any doubts.

2. ELSA Speak

ELSA (English Learning Speech Assistant) Speak in this title is the name of an application that can be used to improve English speaking skills. This app is very useful and easily accessible to everyone.

3. English Students

English Students in this title refers to students who are in the English education department. These students are 5th semester students who have been undergoing their education for approximately 2 years.

4. Speaking Barriers

Speaking Barriers here leads to the difficulty of English students in speaking English. These difficulties can be in the form

of lack of confidence when speaking English in front of the class, improper pronunciation vocabulary, and lack of vocabulary mastered.

C. Research Questions

1. How effective is the ELSA Speak app in improving English speaking skills of English majors?
2. How do students perceive the use of ELSA Speak in improving their speaking skills?

D. Objectives of Study

1. To find out how effective the ELSA Speak application is in improving the speaking skills of students majoring in English.
2. To understand how students perceive the use of ELSA Speak in improving their speaking skills.

E. Significance of Study

1. Effectiveness of Technology in Language Learning: Examining how mobile apps such as ELSA Speak can augment the efficacy of language learning, specifically in enhancing speaking abilities among English language learners.
2. Technological Innovation: Examining the ELSA Speak app's technological breakthroughs and their potential effects on the creation of new language-learning resources and software in the future.
3. User Experience and Satisfaction: Examining how English language learners feel about the ELSA Speak app's usability, satisfaction, and

user experience—including any obstacles or difficulties that arise during use.

4. Motivation and Engagement: Analyzing the effects of ELSA Speak's gamification and interactive elements on English language learners' motivation and engagement—two essential components of language learning and fluency improvement.

F. Hypothesis

The core objective of this study is to gauge the impact of the ELSA Speak application on the speaking proficiency of English majors. The formulation of precise hypotheses is crucial to steer the structured gathering and analysis of quantitative data, facilitating a thorough evaluation of the application's effectiveness within this academic domain. Based on the research objectives, the following quantitative hypotheses were formulated:

H0: The effectiveness of ELSA Speak as a tool to improve speaking skills is not statistically significant.

H1: ELSA Speak significantly enhances speaking skills when used as a tool for improvement.

Formulating this hypothesis will guide the statistical analysis, aiming to assess if the ELSA Speak app significantly enhances students' speaking skills. Should the alternative hypothesis (H1) hold true, it would strongly suggest that the app serves as a valuable supplementary tool for enhancing English speaking abilities.

G. Assumption of Study

In this research, the researcher suggests that the ELSA Speak application can positively influence participants' speaking skills. This belief stems from the app's specialized features, including its advanced voice recognition and tools for improving pronunciation.

Moreover, ELSA Speak offers conversation practice that allows users to engage in practical speaking situations. These functionalities are anticipated to boost users' confidence and precision in speaking, highlighting the app's potential as an effective language learning tool.