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Research Article

## ELSA Speak Application as a Learning Media in Practicing Student's Speaking Skills: Students' Voices

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### A B S T R A C T

ELSA Speak (English Language Speech Assistant) is a mobile application designed to help users improve their English pronunciation and speaking skills. This study provides a thorough understanding of how students in High School. This research examines the voices of students at high school level in the using ELSA Speak as a learning media in the classroom. This study was conducted at one of the High School Class in North Sumatera that consist of 30 female students. The research methodology employed in this study is descriptive qualitative research, with data gathered via questionnaires and interviews. The study's findings revealed that students had a positive view of ELSA Speak in improving their speaking skills. This evident from the wide range of data, which indicates that participants generally agree that ELSA Speak is straightforward to use—especially when it comes to the features that support them as learners.

## INTRODUCTION

Technology has a major role in education, and this fact has become increasingly widely acknowledged (Raja, 2018; Ratheeswari, 2018; Lai, 2019). In the contemporary educational landscape, technology has become an indispensable tool for both educators and students (Granic & Marangunic, 2019). Numerous possibilities to enhance learning and engagement have arisen as a result of the use of technology in English language instruction. Through interactive language learning applications, web-based databases, and virtual classrooms, students now have access to a multitude of knowledge and practice materials at their assistance (Khazhan et al., 2020). Multimedia components including audio files, films, and interactive programs have also enhanced the in-depth and effective

approach to language learning. Personalized learning experiences that are tailored to each student's requirements and preferences are now possible because to technology innovations. Furthermore, through virtual exchange programs, technology has eliminated physical difficulty by linking students with native speakers and a range of cultural experiences (Avgousti, 2018; Hamid, 2015; Yen, 2021; Purwanto; 2020). Include in the field of English instruction, technology will probably play a bigger part as it develops further, opening up interesting possibilities for more efficient, accessible, and engaging language learning (Blake, 2013; Richard, 2015; Costley, 2014).

Technology can be used to improve English speaking lessons while also giving students meaningful, interesting opportunities to practice and advance their oral communication abilities (Ahmadi, 2018; Altun et. al., 2021; Ammade et. al., 2018). In order to fulfill and balance

the requirements of this technological method and enhance it, developments must be implemented (Hz & Daulay, 2021). There are multiple technologies that provided can be used to improve speaking fluency e:g ELSA Speak, Duolingo, BBC Learning English, and Rosetta Stone. In this case is ELSA Application or well known as (English Learning Speech Assistant). According to the data that researcher found on Apps Store, this App has been used since 2015 with more than eleven thousand users around the world. ELSA Speak is ranked 18th in the educational application category in the world. Now ELSA Speak is available in 9 languages, namely Indonesian, Hindi, English, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai and Vietnamese. With a variety of exercises to help users pronounce words, phrases, and sentences correctly, ELSA is made with features that help learners say words with an American accent better. The student can utilize the microphone icon to practice speaking as if they have already listened to the recording.

ELSA can be utilized as a learning aid, particularly if speaking skills are the main focus (Kholid, 2021; Hanna, 2022; Octavianita, 2022). Based on the researcher's observations in the classroom, where the researcher teaches in the internship program now, ELSA is an effective learning media tool for teaching speaking skills. It can be seen on the researcher's observations that the primary issues that students have with their speaking abilities are bad pronunciation, a lack of interpersonal skills, a fear of making mistakes, a limited vocabulary, and a lack of confidence. The majority of students are hesitant to express their opinions in English (Murad et. al., 2019). The actual circumstance that prevents them from speaking is when their classmates make fun of them. In some cases, some students may have a perfectionist mindset, fearing that they must speak flawlessly. Students may lack confidence in their language abilities, fearing that others will judge them for making mistakes. By this phenomenon the researcher can see that teachers play a crucial role in creating a supportive environment that addresses these concerns. By understanding and addressing the root causes of students' fear of speaking in English, educators can help create a positive and encouraging language-learning experience.

Several research investigations have been conducted on the implementation of technology in teaching speaking (see: Samad, 2020; Kholis, 2021; Samad, 2019). In addition, some studies also have explored how Mobile Assisted Learning (MALL) in teaching speaking (e. g Aini et. al., 2022; Ahmed et. al., 2022; Zaitun, 2021). The focus of those studies reviewed some of applications that support in improving speaking skills such like Instagram, TikTok and Duolingo. However, researchers observed that there is still limited research examining the use of the ELSA-Speak application as a learning tool in teaching speaking skills in

the classroom. As a result, due to this gap in the framework of literature, this study will show that learning to use Elssa-Speak as Mobile Assisted Learning (MALL) will increase student enthusiasm. Elssa-Speak is also effective in supporting online-based learning media, where students can easily access this application anytime and anywhere. Elsa Speak can be a great way to overcome time and location barriers in language learning.

Teaching speaking with ELSA Speak is proved can bring some benefits for students (Nguyen, 2021). With the help of an AI-powered speaking students may practice pronouncing words correctly and speaking in any setting—including at home—without having to worry about "performing" in front of their teachers and peers. ELSA provides personalized feedback on pronunciation, intonation, fluency, word stress, listening, and contextual vocabulary, and it has been proven to improve students' English-speaking levels. In addition, ELSA provides situational learning, gamified activities, and a welcoming multicultural environment to enhance student engagement and enjoyment in the classroom. Teachers have also mentioned that ELSA makes it simple to determine which students in the class have pronunciation issues, which makes it easier to work with a native English teacher to provide targeted pronunciation lessons.

Researchers investigated into the usage of ELSA Speak as a learning tool in a number of earlier studies. According to Kholis (2021) research, which focused on enhancing students' pronunciation in Qualitative approach, ELSA Speak can successfully and efficiently help students with their pronunciation. It can, in fact, inspire students to participate in their pronunciation study. Research data demonstrating an increase in scores from the teaching cycles from two to four in grade supports this conclusion. The research provided indicates that the ELSA Speak App can provide students with additional input and stimulation to aid in their pronunciation and speech development.

In contrast, Pinotoan et al. (2022) also examined ELSA Speak using a qualitative approach using the Pretest-Posttest Design, wherein it was concluded that a significant increase occurred between the pre- and post-tests. The mean score on the pre-test is 4.6 and the mean score on the post-test is 7.9. The results of the research conducted by Pinotoan et al. (2022) indicate that the usage of proper educational media can have an impact on students' learning outcomes. It can also be determined that using ELSA Speak has greatly enhanced students' pronunciation abilities.

To that extent, this study aimed to investigate the implementation of speaking learning process with the use of ELSA Speak by the voices of students. Up that point, this study focuses on this research question: How are student's voices on the teaching English. It offers to

provide a response to the research question, which examines whether or not students' speaking skills can be improved using the ELSA Speak app.

## METHOD

### Design

This research examines how the ELSA-Speak application is used as a learning tool in the teaching and learning process. A qualitative method is used on this study. Researcher used qualitative methods because the researcher wanted to examine the voices of students who used the Elssa application in the process of learning speaking skills. The research design used in this study is qualitative case study research. The process of this research divided into 2 steps. The use of ELSA Speak in the classroom as part of the teaching process is covered in the first step. In this section, the researcher uses the Group Discussion approach to personally instruct the students and ensure that every participant can participate in the speaking exercise using ELSA Speak. Every group, which has already been divided into five groups, has a worksheet to complete for their practical speech assignment. Subsequently, the second stage involves the collection of student voices data through interviews and questionere data based on teaching and learning experiences. Researching the implementation of an application using qualitative methods involves studying the experiences, perceptions, and interactions of individuals involved in or affected by the application (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case study's gathered information sources will shed a spotlight on the issue and allow for an extensive investigation of contextual elements that may influence these perceptions.

### Participant and Techniques of Data Collection

This research involved 30 participants from high school students at one of the state schools in North Sumatra. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants. This study was conducted in a school that support Mobile Assisted Learning (MALL) where smartphones are used as a learning medium for the majority of the teaching and learning process. Students are free to bring smartphones and teachers also require students to use applications as learning media. The range of the participant age is from 17 to 18 years old and had the basic knowledge in the using of ELSA Speak application.

Additionally, two primary methods were used to collect data for this study: a modified questionnaire that included elements of certain learning approaches or teaching strategies (Jurgelaitis et al., 2019), which used five Likert scale and semi-structured interviews. These techniques were used to thoroughly investigate and comprehend the using of ELSA-Speak as a learning media in improving students speaking skills.

### Technique of Data Analysis

The researcher used two methods to analyses the data, quantitatively and qualitatively. A variety of quantitative analyses of students' perceptions will be obtained by processing the gathered questionnaire responses. The interview results will be comprehensively developed qualitatively in order to get conclusions from a more in-depth interpretation. Based on this approach researcher can gather information from various sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and archival records, providing a comprehensive view of the subject. In addition, this is in line with the research that researcher conducting now where the data requires depth analysis of actual-life situations, capturing the nuances and complexities that may be overlooked in more controlled research designs.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The researcher used an ELSA Speak learning technique, working as a teacher in a direct practice procedure, to gather student voices on the using of ELSA as a learning media. Five groups of students participated in the group discussion method are created by the researcher. The researcher chose three assignment topics that must be completed by each group, with five to six statements each assignment, in order to ensure that every student is actively engaged in the oral speaking practice process utilizing ELSA Speak. Subsequently, each participant who completed one speaking exercise in ELSA Speak is required to record the statement they practiced on the researcher's worksheet. To ensure that each member of the practice group works directly, they must write their name on the statement they practice orally in ELSA Speak.

Figure 1. Student's Group Worksheet

It can be seen on the appendix that each of the unit the researcher put the column of stars which means that each participant will receive a 3-star rating from ELSA Speak if they can pronounce every statement in each question unit correctly, which indicates excellent pronunciation.

Researcher also ensures that students must write down statements that they have been practiced orally with its meaning, to ensure students' understanding of each statement they said. Therefore, researcher also make every effort to include students' reading comprehension into ELSA Speak speaking practice. Additionally, the ELSA system also tested students' listening comprehension through pronunciation exercises. Students will be able to pronounce the sentences if they could hear audio

instructions clearly. The amount of stars they receive indicates this. In picture 1.1, students managed to get 3 stars in each unit. It means they are capable of listening and reading skills.

After the teaching method was implemented directly to the students, researchers collected research data to get students' voices regarding the using of ELSA Speak as a teaching media, this can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1.** Student's Voices Using ELSA Speak

No.	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I enjoy learning using the ELSA-Speak application	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
2	Learning with the ELSA Speak application is fun	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%
3	I can easily learn using the ELSA Application	33,3%	66,7%	0%	0%	0%
4	I can easily adapt using the features in the ELSA application	20%	73,3%	3,3%	3,3%	0%
5	ELSA application is a difficult application to use	3,3%	6,7%	6,7%	73,3%	10%
6	ELSA application helps improve my pronunciation in speaking skills	43,3%	53,3%	3,3%	0%	0%
7	ELSA application helps me to increase my confidence in speaking	36,7%	63,3%	0%	0%	0%
8	ELSA application helps improve vocabulary in speaking	26,7%	66,7%	0%	0%	6,7%
9	ELSA application helps improve grammar in speaking	36,7%	63,3%	0%	0%	0%
10	Learning with ELSA application can monitor the development of speaking skills	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
11	I believe that by using ELSA application I can be competent in speaking English	53,3%	46,7%	0%	0%	0%
12	I'm willing to use ELSA application again because this application is useful for me	33,3%	60%	0%	6,7%	0%

### Discussion

It can be seen from the table above that 50% of the participants agreed and 50% more of strongly agreed that they enjoyed in using ELSA Speak. It means that ELSA speak can provide an interesting learning activity in upgrading the audience enjoyment. In the using of ELSA Speak, to keep users interested and inspired to practice pronouncing words correctly in English, the app incorporates interactive courses and activities. The learning process can be made more rewarding and pleasurable with this gamified method. With this gamified method learning English pronunciation more enjoyable and engaging. As they move through the program, users can track their scores, earn incentives, and unlock achievements, which adds excitement and challenge to the learning process. It can be seen on the interview bellow:

*"Because I have never used an application before to learn English at school, so I personally prefer to this application because with ELSA-Speak I feel*

*enjoy in learning English, I can hear the correct pronunciation of words directly from the native speaker, I can play back the audio again, and I can also record my voice repeatedly until my pronunciation is correct"*

#Interviewee 1

The statement above is related with the opinion expressed by Su Fan & Zou Di (2020) where their research focus is Technology-enhanced collaborative language learning: theoretical foundations, technologies, and implications. This is consistent with the findings from the interview above, which demonstrated that the use of technology, such as virtual classroom management systems, enhanced learners' motivation, helped them acquire language beyond their current level of proficiency, and improved their listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. This statement is proven by research data which shows that of the 10 theoretical frameworks that have been investigated in this research, nine types of technologies, and 11 benefits

of technology-enhanced collaborative language learning (Su Fan & Zou Di; 2020).

It means that learning English can be improved by employing applications that provide teachers and students with an engaging and enjoyable teaching technique, in contrast to the traditional learning approach that primarily involves taking notes, writing, and memorization.

It also related to the next statement where the 50 % participants are agreed and 50% also strongly agreed about the statement of ELSA Speak is fun application to learn English especially in speaking skills.

*"In my personal opinion, learning with ELSA application is fun Miss, because we work in practical groups, so I personally and my friends can also help each other in practicing speaking on the ELSA Speak. If I have difficulty in pronouncing the words, we can take turns practicing it. Speaking in this app makes learning fun because we have friends who can practice speaking with"*

#interviewee 2

Throughout the learning process, this app offers guidance and clear directions. Since lessons and exercises are walked users through step-by-step, it's easy to understand goals and how to get better at pronouncing words correctly. After the guidance of the practical using in oral speech the users of ELSA Speak can get the real time feedback right away after the practice. With its real-time pronunciation feedback, ELSA Speak assists users in recognizing and fixing errors as they happen. This instant feedback system helps users become more proficient pronouncers and speeds up the learning process. It is related to the statement where 66,7% of the participants agreed and 33,3% strongly agreed that they can easily learn using the ELSA Application. To accommodate various user abilities, ELSA Speak modifies task units according to the user's proficiency level, facilitating a steady improvement in speaking abilities. With so many options for themes and exercises, learners may stay engaged and motivated throughout their learning process.

In the other hand, the researcher found that in the process adaptation in the using of ELSA Speak application the students seem struggle to find the unit of the exercises that the researcher has set on the student's worksheet. It can be seen on the statement that 6,7% of the participants felt that ELSA application is a difficult application to use. Even though the percentage of the statement disagree higher than agree which is 73,3%. This data is proved by the fact that ELSA Speak is a payable application where the users should buy the VIP member to open access all of the unit exercises. In this case the researcher only used the open access exercises unit where it only has a minimum free access. Because most all of the

exercises were locked the participant should scroll all the way the units to find the open access exercises.

*"In my opinion, there are actually no difficulties in using this application, except for finding the task unit. I have to look for the unit that matches the one in the worksheet among the many locked units. that's all I think miss"*

#interviewee 3

This claim is supported by research that conducted by Wang et al., (2019) regarding the use of establishing a model for evaluating paid mobile learning apps, which indicates that one of the main obstacles to downloading a premium app is its cost. Potential users of these apps are probably going to assess the charge, cost, and price of the m-learning app in addition to its perceived features and advantages.

In the next statement it shows that 53,3% agreed and 43,3% strongly agreed that ELSA application helps them to improve their pronunciation in speaking skills. This statement related to the fact that ELSA Speak provides audio visual learning which means ELSA improves our learning process by combining visual and auditory input. It helps us learn how to make the right sounds with our mouth and tongue by giving it visual representations of sounds and mouth positions. Enhancing retention and quickening the learning process are two benefits of this multimodal method. By audio visual learning ELSA Speak requires the participants to speak loudly until they get the right pronunciation of the text. They can enhance their general speaking abilities and form better pronunciation habits by concentrating on certain sounds and practicing them separately. As a result of practical audio visual, it will emphasize the confidence in speaking directly. ELSA offers a secure and encouraging setting for speaking practice. It can feel more at ease experimenting with pronunciation and boosting the confidence because we can use the app in private without worrying about being judged or embarrassed. This fact, related to the statement where it shows 63,3% of the participants agreed and 36,7% strongly agreed that ELSA application helps them to increase their confidence in speaking.

*"If I study manually with my teacher, usually my teacher only teaches me to memorize it and keep memorizing it, whereas in ELSA Speak we are told which letters are wrong or the intonation directly, so I feel it is easy to be able to speak English without the shame of being judged by friends or teacher at school. I feel more confident if I can practice by myself and get direct feedback"*

#Interviewee 4

According to a study by Nguyen (2021), teaching speaking to students using ELSA Speak has been shown to have some advantages. This statement relates to the interview above because one of the particular benefits of learning through applications is that students don't have to worry about receiving criticism from friends or teachers when speaking English because ELSA Speak has assistant technology that instantly corrects a user's intonation as well as their letter usage.

It is found that ELSA Speak can help the participants to improve their vocabulary in speaking. The data shows that 66,7 % of the participants agreed and 26,7% strongly agreed about this statement. Vocabulary courses in ELSA are frequently integrated into sentences and phrases. Users who study vocabulary in context become more capable of comprehending the context independently and how they are employed in daily conversations. This contextual learning strategy promotes incorporating new words into learners' speaking repertoire while improving in vocabulary memorization. The researcher designed the student worksheet group to write it down because speaking can help students use a wider vocabulary. It can be seen on the interview below:

*"Learning with ELSA Speak is easy, because apart from having audio visuals and being able to repeat them, I can also know the meaning straight away, so those who didn't know before will know it. The meaning is adapted to each topic so I can remember it easily and can apply it directly when speaking English."*

#interviewee 5

However, the study discovered that ELSA application also helps to improve grammar in speaking. More than 63,3% of the participants agreed and 36,7% strongly agreed about this statement. It can be seen on the practical using that ELSA Speak usually provides lessons that are structured and cover a variety of grammatical issues, including word order, sentence structure, verb tenses, and more. This statement is supported by the research that by Avgousti (2018), Hamid, (2015), Yen, (2021), and Purwanto (2020) that state technology has overcome physical obstacles by connecting students with native speakers and a variety of cultural experiences through virtual exchange programs. Learners can gain a deeper comprehension of English grammar and effectively use it in spoken language by methodically going over the many rules. ELSA frequently provides individualized learning experiences based on the grammatical requirements and skill level of each user. By targeting each learner's unique grammar issues, this individualized method ensures that students receive focused instruction and practice in the areas where they struggle the most.

ELSA frequently has tools for monitoring users' advancement over time. This could involve using charts or graphs to illustrate advances in particular speaking abilities. Users are able to observe changes in their performance and spot areas that need more attention or improvement patterns. Based on the participant's voices it shows that 60% agreed and 40% strongly agreed that they could see their development in this app. For every speaking exercise or practice session, ELSA might offer comprehensive performance indicators. Words per minute, accuracy rate, pronunciation scores, and fluency ratings are a few examples of these measurements. Users can learn more about their speaking talents and follow their progress over time by examining these measures.

In response to the following statement, 53,3% of participants strongly agreed and 46,7% agreed that they could become competent English speakers by utilizing the ELSA application. It can be seen on the interviews above about the positive respond of the participant in the using of this app. ELSA has assisted many language learners in reaching goals, whether they are to master grammar, reduce accents, improve pronunciation, or increase fluency (Nashira, 2021). Not only that based on participant feedback, technology developments, and research findings on language learning, ELSA is regularly updated and improved. This dedication to ongoing development guarantees that the software will always be useful, efficient, and adaptable to the changing requirements of language learners.

According to the final statement, because the ELSA application is helpful to them, 60% of participants agreed and 33,3% strongly agreed that they would use it again. It can be seen on the interview below:

*"After practicing at school with Miss, I often use this Elsa application at home, sometimes I also try it at school with my friends. because when I have free time it's fun to learn English from the application"*

#Interviewee 6

The viewpoint given by is consistent with this statement (Khazhan et al., 2020). Where Students now have plenty of information and practice materials at their command due to language learning apps, online databases, and virtual classes. Students can access education from any location with an internet connection because of virtual classrooms. People can engage in lessons wherever they are due to this accessibility, which eliminates barriers based on location. Millions of students have using ELSA throughout the world, and its efficacy has been confirmed by the many good comments and testimonies it has received. Once they utilize the program regularly over time, many users report

considerable improvements in their fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking skill.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above it can be concluded that ELSA Speak can provide an interesting learning activity in upgrading the audience enjoyment in speaking skills. When utilizing the ELSA application to learn English, students respond effectively, particularly when it comes to speaking abilities. The study's findings demonstrate that students may successfully follow directions and perform well while practicing direct speaking. Not only that, apart from being successful in improving students' speaking skills, ELSA Speak is also able to increase students' confidence in speaking English. This can be seen from the students' enthusiasm in carrying out each speaking practice given and successfully getting a perfect score. ELSA offers a secure and encouraging setting for speaking practice.

However, this study is limited in the term of numbers of respondents, which was only conducted at one school. The result does not represent the whole students in Medan. It is suggested for further researches to carry a wider investigation with more numbers of participants.

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