IMPROVING SPEAKING ENGLISH ABILITY BY USING ELSA SPEAK APPLICATION AT THE THIRD SEMESTER STUDENTS' OF TBI OF STAIN MAJENE

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine how well third-semester students in STAIN Majene's English Education program can speak English using the ELSA Speak application. The purpose of the study is to determine whether this technology can enhance students' speaking abilities to a substantial degree, considering the importance of English proficiency in the modern globalised world. Twenty students participated in the study, which used an appropriate experimental design. The experimental group used the ELSA Speak app, while the control group received no therapy. Pre- and post-tests were used to gather information about speaking abilities before and after the intervention. The results of the analysis, which was done using SPSS, showed that there had been no discernible change in speaking abilities between the experimental and control groups. These results imply that, despite the ELSA Speak application's intended assistance with language learning, its effects might not be as noticeable as first thought. The study highlights the potential for growth and improvement in this subject. It emphasises the need for additional research and development in language education to adequately address students' difficulties in developing English-speaking abilities. In the end, this study emphasises the necessity for a thorough approach to language learning that integrates a variety of instructional tactics and technologies, serving as a reference for educators and future research.

Keywords: *ELSA Speak, English, speaking*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language competency in the modern, globalised world has become crucial for classroom and workplace success. As a lingua franca, English helps people communicate with people from different countries and cultures (Sutrisno & Yani, 2019). Fluency in English is more widely recognised as a necessary skill that can lead to opportunities in international relations, education, and work. Nonetheless, many students need help to become proficient English speakers, especially in developing nations. This difficulty is particularly apparent for students in places like Indonesia, where English is not the local tongue.

Indonesia presents particular linguistic issues because of its vast cultural diversity and more than 700 languages spoken there (Wongso et al., 2024). Even though English is taught in schools, speaking and listening are frequently less important than reading and writing. Grammar and vocabulary are undoubtedly crucial aspects of learning a language, and they are usually the emphasis of traditional classroom training. However, more opportunities for pupils to utilise natural language are frequently needed for this technique to be successful. Consequently, even if they possess a theoretical understanding of the language, many Indonesian students require assistance communicating effectively in English. Learners may feel inadequate and frustrated due to this gap between academic knowledge and real-world application, which can impede their language development.

More practice opportunities in authentic settings are needed to improve speaking abilities. In certain Indonesian schools, the atmosphere could promote conversational practice or active engagement. Because they fear being judged by their peers or teachers, students may be timid or lack the confidence to speak up (Jalaluddin & Jazadi, 2020). In addition, the lack of native English speakers in the students' immediate environment worsens the problem by depriving them of opportunities to engage in immersive language learning, essential for improving pronunciation and fluency.

To address these challenges, technology-based language learning tools have emerged as promising solutions. These tools offer innovative ways to enhance language acquisition by providing interactive and engaging learning experiences. One such tool is the ELSA Speak application, an artificial intelligence-powered platform to help learners improve their English pronunciation and fluency. ELSA Speak stands out due to its personalized lessons that adapt to the individual needs of each learner. By utilizing advanced speech recognition technology, the application offers real-time feedback on pronunciation, enabling users to identify and correct errors immediately. These tools allow students to engage in conversational practice without the fear of anxiety that may arise when interacting with native speaker (Yu & Nazir, 2021).

In addition to focusing on pronunciation, ELSA Speak includes interactive exercises that simulate real-world communication scenarios. This feature allows students to practice speaking in contexts that mirror everyday conversations, enhancing their confidence and competence in English. By providing a safe and supportive environment for practice, ELSA Speak empowers learners to take charge of their language learning journey, encouraging them to engage more actively with the language. Furthermore, the use of mobile-assisted language learning tools has been shown to be effective in enhancing speaking skills among ESL and EFL learners. These tools can provide students with immediate feedback on their pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, enabling them to identify areas for improvement and develop their speaking abilities more effectively (Lehman et al., 2020)

This study aims to find out how well third-semester English education students at STAIN Majene, a renowned Islamic institution in West Sulawesi, can speak English thanks to the ELSA Speak application. The main foci of the study will be the effects of ELSA Speak on students' pronunciation, fluency, and general confidence in speaking English. By collecting information on students' experiences and performance, this study aims to add to the expanding corpus of research on technology-enhanced language learning.

The research's conclusions will significantly impact both language learners and educators. Should ELSA Speak be a successful tool for enhancing English speaking abilities, students looking to advance their language proficiency may find it beneficial. Furthermore, the findings of this study guide educators in integrating technology into their teaching practices by informing the creation of future language learning tools and tactics. Ultimately, this research aims to close the knowledge gap between theory and practice by giving Indonesian students the tools they need to thrive in a world that is becoming more interconnected daily.

2. METHOD

In this study, the informants consisted of third-semester students enrolled in the English Education study program at STAIN Majene. The population was defined as all 28 students within this program. A sample of 20 students was selected using a simple random sampling technique, ensuring each student had an equal opportunity to participate. The random selection was facilitated by the Spin the Wheel-Random Picker application, which assigned students to either the experimental group or the control group.

Data collection methods included a pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The pre-test was administered to both groups to establish baseline data regarding their English-speaking abilities. During this phase, students were asked to respond to questions about individuals they admired, and their presentations were recorded for analysis.

Following the pre-test, the experimental group received treatment by implementing the ELSA Speak application, while the control group did not receive any intervention. This method was utilized to ensure the validity of the results obtained.

After the treatment period, a post-test was conducted to measure changes in the student's speaking abilities. The same set of questions, albeit in a different format, was presented to both groups to evaluate improvements in pronunciation and overall communication skills.

The equipment used for data collection included the ELSA Speak application for the experimental group and the Spin the Wheel-Random Picker application for randomly selecting participants.

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Results of Independent Sample T-test (Pre-test)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
						Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df				Lower	Upper
Pre-Test	Equal variances assumed	.071	.792	-.078	18	.939	-.500	6.427	-14.002	13.002
	Equal variances not assumed			-.078	17.029	.939	-.500	6.427	-14.058	13.058

Table 2. Results of Independent Sample T-test (Post-test)

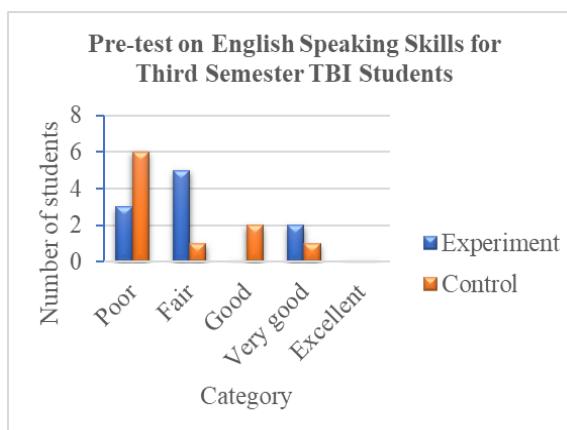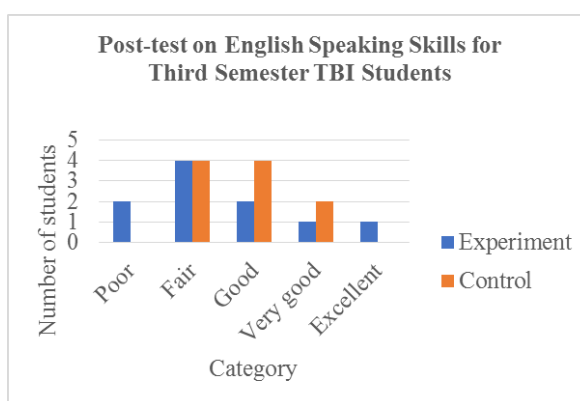|		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
						Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	T	df				Lower	Upper
Post-Test	Equal variances assumed	1.090	.310	-.934	18	.363	-5.300	5.677	-17.226	6.626
	Equal variances not assumed			-.934	13.635	.367	-5.300	5.677	-17.506	6.906

Figure 1. Pre-test English Speaking

Figure 2. Post-test English Speaking

4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in improving the English-speaking abilities of third-semester students in the TBI program at STAIN Majene. Despite the increasing emphasis on English language proficiency in academic settings, particularly in universities like STAIN Majene, the results indicated that integrating the ELSA Speak application yielded insignificant improvements in students' speaking abilities. The findings suggest that while technology-based tools can benefit language learning, their effectiveness may depend on various factors, including the specific learning context, teaching methods, and student engagement (Ramadani et al., 2020).

The analysis conducted through an independent sample t-test revealed a t-count value of -0.078, which was significantly lower than the t-table value of 2.101, with a corresponding p-value of 0.939. These statistical outcomes suggest no meaningful difference in the English-speaking scores between the experimental group, which utilized the ELSA Speak application, and the control group, which did not receive any intervention. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted, indicating that the application did not have a measurable impact on enhancing the participants' speaking skills.

This research raises important questions about the efficacy of technology-based language learning tools in improving language skills. While the ELSA Speak application was designed to assist learners in developing their pronunciation and speaking abilities through interactive exercises and feedback, the lack of significant improvement in this study suggests that its effectiveness may be limited under certain conditions.

One possible explanation for these results could be the nature of the intervention itself. The ELSA Speak application focuses on pronunciation and may need to sufficiently address other critical components of speaking proficiency, such as fluency, coherence, and the ability to engage in spontaneous conversation. Speaking is a multifaceted skill that involves accurate pronunciation and the ability to articulate thoughts clearly and confidently in real-time interactions. Therefore, while the application may help with pronunciation, it might not adequately prepare students for the complexities of actual speaking scenarios.

Additionally, the study's context may have affected the outcomes. The participants were third-semester students who may have varying levels of prior exposure to English language learning and technology-enhanced education. If some students were already proficient in pronunciation, the application may have provided insufficient challenges for further improvement. Conversely, lower-proficiency students may need help engaging with the application, leading to minimal gains effectively. This aligns with the findings by Kusrin et al. (2023), who noted that learners' prior knowledge and engagement significantly influence the effectiveness of language learning applications.

Moreover, other studies have shown mixed results regarding the effectiveness of technology in language learning. For instance, some research has indicated that blended learning

approaches, which combine traditional teaching methods with technology, can lead to better outcomes in language acquisition. This suggests that the ELSA Speak application might have been more effective if integrated into a broader curriculum that includes face-to-face instruction and interactive speaking activities. On the other hand, while certain studies have demonstrated that technology can bolster specific language skills such as vocabulary and grammar, contradictory evidence suggests that technology may be less effective for developing more integrated and complex abilities like writing and reading comprehension.

Despite the valuable insights gained from this research, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size of 20 students may have differed from the broader population of third-semester TBI students at STAIN Majene. A larger sample could provide more robust data and enhance the generalizability of the findings. Small sample sizes can limit a study's statistical power, making it difficult to detect significant differences even when they may exist.

Additionally, the duration of the treatment may have needed to be increased to observe substantial changes in speaking abilities. The intervention period was relatively short, and language learning is a gradual process often requiring extended exposure and practice (Jameel & Shawaqfeh, 2022). Future studies could benefit from extended intervention periods to allow for more meaningful engagement with the application and more significant opportunities for skill development.

Another limitation pertains to the reliance on a single application for the intervention. While the ELSA Speak application offers valuable features, it may only encompass some aspects of speaking proficiency. Future research could explore the effectiveness of multiple applications or a combination of tools to provide a more comprehensive approach to language learning. As Mukti et al. (2024) noted, integrating various technological resources can enhance learning outcomes by addressing different learning needs.

Finally, the study did not account for external factors that may have influenced the results. Students' motivation, previous language exposure, and individual learning styles could significantly impact their engagement with the application and their overall speaking development. Future research should consider these factors to provide a more nuanced understanding of the variables in technology-enhanced language learning (Shadiev & Wang, 2022). While the study found that students actively engaged in using technology to self-regulate their language learning, the researchers observed notable variations in how the participants leveraged the available tools and applications, suggesting that factors beyond the technology itself, such as learners.

Given the limitations identified in this study, several avenues for future research can be proposed. Firstly, conducting studies with larger sample sizes would enhance the reliability of the findings and allow for more definitive conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application and similar tools.

Secondly, extending the duration of interventions could provide a more thorough assessment of the application's impact on speaking skills. More extended treatment periods allow students to engage more deeply with the application and potentially lead to more significant improvements in their language abilities.

Moreover, future research could investigate the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in conjunction with other teaching methods. For example, integrating the application into a blended learning model that combines classroom instruction with technology could yield more favorable outcomes. Additionally, exploring the potential of different technological tools and applications in language learning could provide valuable insights into best practices for enhancing speaking skills. Comparative studies that evaluate multiple applications could help educators identify the most effective resources for their students.

Finally, qualitative research methods could be employed to gain deeper insights into students' experiences with the ELSA Speak application. Interviews or focus groups provide valuable information about students' perceptions of the application, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. Understanding the learner's perspective is crucial for refining educational technology and ensuring it meets students' needs.

In summary, this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in improving the English-speaking abilities of third-semester TBI students at STAIN Majene. The findings indicated that the application significantly improved speaking skills, highlighting potential limitations in its design and implementation. While the study contributes to the growing body of research on technology-enhanced language learning, it also underscores the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of such tools in diverse educational contexts.

Future research should address the limitations identified in this study by employing larger sample sizes, extending intervention durations, and exploring the integration of multiple teaching methods. By doing so, researchers can provide more comprehensive insights into the role of technology in language education and contribute to the development of effective strategies for enhancing students' speaking abilities.

5. CONCLUSION

This research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in improving the English-speaking skills of third-semester students in the English Education program at STAIN Majene. The study results indicate that the ELSA Speak application did not significantly improve students' speaking abilities. Specifically, the analysis of the pre-test scores revealed a t-count value of -0.078 with a corresponding p-value of 0.939. These findings suggest no meaningful difference in speaking scores between the experimental group, which utilized the ELSA Speak application, and the control group, which did not engage with the application.

Furthermore, the post-test results reinforced this conclusion, showing a significance level of 0.363, which is greater than the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that the differences observed in the students' speaking abilities before and after using the application were not statistically significant. Consequently, the working hypothesis (H1) was rejected, and the null hypothesis (H0) was accepted. This leads to the conclusion that the ELSA Speak application, in its current implementation, needs to significantly enhance the speaking skills of third-semester students in the English Education program at STAIN Majene.

These findings have noteworthy implications for educators and curriculum developers. While technology can play a role in language learning, reliance on a single application may not yield the desired outcomes in speaking proficiency. Educators must consider a more diversified approach to teaching speaking skills, incorporating various methods and resources to engage students more effectively.

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that teachers explore alternative media and teaching strategies that may be more effective in enhancing students' speaking skills. Engaging students in interactive and communicative activities can create a more dynamic learning environment, increasing their motivation and interest in learning English. While the ELSA Speak application can still be a part of the learning toolkit, it should be viewed as something other than a standalone solution for improving speaking abilities.

Educators should encourage more frequent opportunities for English communication within the classroom to support students' development further. This can include group discussions, presentations, and role-playing activities that allow students to practice speaking in a supportive environment. Such practices help students become more familiar with the language and boost their confidence in speaking in front of peers.

Additionally, this research is a valuable reference for future studies on technology-enhanced language learning. Researchers are encouraged to build upon these findings by exploring the effectiveness of various language learning applications and methodologies. Future research could investigate integrating multiple tools and resources to create a more comprehensive approach to language education. Educators can better prepare students for real-world communication challenges and enhance their language proficiency.

In summary, while the ELSA Speak application did not demonstrate significant improvements in speaking skills among the participants, the study highlights the importance of

exploring diverse teaching methods and fostering an interactive learning environment. By implementing these suggestions, educators can contribute to more effective language learning experiences that ultimately empower students to achieve greater fluency and confidence in their English-speaking abilities

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