

FACTORS INFLUENCING PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD THE USE OF MOBILE APPLICATIONS IN LEARNING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi persepsi mahasiswa calon guru terhadap penggunaan aplikasi mobile dalam pembelajaran keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan 20 mahasiswa program pendidikan bahasa Inggris yang telah menggunakan aplikasi seperti ELSA Speak selama praktik mengajar. Data dikumpulkan melalui angket tertutup dengan skala Likert dan wawancara semi-terstruktur terhadap lima peserta terpilih. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa peserta memiliki persepsi yang positif terhadap penggunaan aplikasi mobile, dengan faktor-faktor utama meliputi kemanfaatan, kemudahan penggunaan, kualitas umpan balik, motivasi, pengalaman sebelumnya, fleksibilitas, dan peningkatan kepercayaan diri. Sebagian besar peserta juga menunjukkan minat untuk mengintegrasikan aplikasi tersebut dalam pengajaran mereka di masa depan. Simpulan dari penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa aplikasi mobile seperti ELSA Speak tidak hanya mendukung pembelajaran mandiri, tetapi juga berpotensi menjadi sumber tambahan dalam pembelajaran bahasa. Implikasi dari temuan ini menunjukkan perlunya pelatihan penggunaan teknologi digital dalam program pendidikan guru serta pengembangan aplikasi yang lebih kontekstual dan responsif terhadap kebutuhan pedagogis.

Kata kunci: MALL, Mobile Application, Speaking Skills.

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify the factors influencing pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile applications in learning English speaking skills. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the study involved 20 students from an English education program who had experience using mobile apps such as ELSA Speak during their teaching practicum. Data were collected through a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with five selected participants. The findings revealed that participants held positive perceptions of mobile applications, with key influencing factors including perceived usefulness, ease of use, feedback quality, motivation, prior experience, flexibility, and increased speaking confidence. Most participants also expressed intentions to integrate such applications into their future teaching practices. The conclusion of the study confirms that mobile apps like ELSA Speak support autonomous learning and have potential as supplementary resources in language instruction. The findings imply a need for digital technology training in teacher education programs and further development of pedagogically responsive and contextualized mobile applications.

Keywords: MALL, Mobile Application, Speaking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak English effectively is considered a fundamental skill in today's globalized world. Speaking facilitates not only verbal communication but also cultural connection and self-expression. Among the four essential language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and

writing—speaking is often seen as the most challenging to acquire, particularly for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners (Jaelani & Nuraeni, 2022; Pawlak, 2018). Despite being central to real-life communication, many students struggle to master speaking due to a lack of practice opportunities, limited exposure to authentic

language input, and psychological barriers such as anxiety and low confidence.

With the advancement of technology, particularly in the field of mobile learning, new pathways for developing speaking skills have emerged. One of the most prominent innovations is Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which utilizes portable devices such as smartphones and tablets to support language acquisition both inside and outside the classroom (El-Hussein & Cronje, 2010; Kukulska-Hulme, 2016; Jaelani et al., 2020). MALL is known for its flexibility, accessibility, and interactivity, enabling learners to practice speaking anytime and anywhere without relying solely on formal instruction (Klimova, 2017; Yang, 2013)

Mobile applications, such as ELSA Speak, Duolingo, Cake, and Memrise, represent practical tools in the MALL ecosystem. These apps provide learners with features like speech recognition, personalized feedback, gamification, and structured learning paths, all of which contribute to improving their English speaking performance (Anggraini, 2022; Minh & Nguyen, 2023). ELSA Speak, for example, allows learners to practice pronunciation with native-like models and receive real-time feedback through AI-powered assessment (Sholekhah & Fakhurriana, 2023). These features are particularly beneficial for independent learners who seek to improve their oral skills in a personalized and stress-free environment.

However, the effectiveness of such applications does not solely depend on their technical features. The perception of the users, especially pre-service teachers, plays a critical role in determining how the apps are utilized and integrated into teaching and learning contexts. Perception, in this regard, refers to how individuals interpret and evaluate their experiences with mobile applications—shaped by factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, prior experience, motivation, and the quality of feedback provided (Rinanda et al., 2019; Rizqa Putri et al., 2024). As future educators, pre-service teachers' views toward educational technologies may directly impact their willingness to adopt these tools in their future classrooms.

Understanding the factors that influence pre-service teachers' perceptions is essential for several reasons. First, it provides insight into the readiness of future teachers to implement

technology-enhanced learning approaches. Second, it helps institutions and policymakers design professional development programs that address actual needs and barriers. Third, it informs app developers on how to improve user experience based on real pedagogical considerations.

Previous studies have explored learners' perceptions of mobile applications in language learning. For example, Rizqa Putri et al., (2024) found that pre-service teachers appreciated the flexibility and autonomy offered by mobile apps, particularly in supporting speaking practice. Rinanda et al., (2019) emphasized that factors such as interactivity, convenience, and real-time feedback significantly shaped students' attitudes toward app-based speaking practice. In a more recent study, Rizqa Putri et al., (2024) demonstrated that learners using ELSA Speak showed measurable improvements in pronunciation and fluency, indicating that well-designed apps can bridge gaps in traditional speaking instruction.

Nonetheless, limited research has been conducted specifically on the influential factors shaping the perceptions of pre-service teachers, especially those who are actively engaged in teaching practicums or internships. This is a critical oversight, given that pre-service teachers are not only learners but also future facilitators of learning. Their perceptions—shaped by both their learning experiences and pedagogical exposure—offer valuable perspectives on the integration of mobile applications into formal language education.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors influencing pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile applications in learning English speaking skills. It particularly focuses on how aspects such as usability, feedback, personalization, prior experience, and motivation contribute to shaping their attitudes. By identifying and analyzing these factors, this study seeks to offer pedagogical insights for teacher education programs, practical recommendations for mobile app developers, and implications for the broader integration of technology in language learning.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to investigate the factors influencing pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile applications in learning English speaking skills. A qualitative approach was

chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perspectives within their specific contexts (Creswell, 2018). The participants consisted of 20 pre-service teachers enrolled in an English Education Program at a university in Indonesia, all of whom had experience using mobile applications during their practicum for speaking practice. From this group, five participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews based on their willingness and the richness of their questionnaire responses.

Data were collected using two instruments: a closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was distributed to all 20 participants and contained 15 statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale, covering themes such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, feedback quality, motivation, prior experience, and flexibility. This instrument aimed to identify general patterns in perceptions toward mobile application use in speaking learning. To gain deeper insights, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the five selected participants. The interview questions focused on their personal experiences with mobile apps (such as ELSA Speak), the strengths and weaknesses of these apps, their impact on confidence and motivation, and their intentions regarding technology integration in teaching.

The data analysis involved both descriptive interpretation of questionnaire results and thematic analysis of interview transcripts. While the questionnaire data were quantitative in nature, the analysis emphasized qualitative interpretation to identify prevailing attitudes and variations among participants. Interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed to extract key themes that explain the factors shaping perceptions. To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing the questionnaire and interview data, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the study's conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that pre-service teachers held generally positive perceptions toward the use of mobile applications, particularly ELSA Speak, in developing their English speaking skills. Drawing on data from 20 questionnaire respondents and five interviewees (referred to as Participant 1 to Participant 5), several key factors

emerged, including perceived usefulness, ease of use, feedback quality, motivation, prior experience, flexibility, confidence building, and future teaching intention.

The questionnaire data indicated that 85% of participants agreed that mobile applications significantly improved their speaking performance, especially in pronunciation and fluency. Most participants perceived ELSA Speak as a useful and practical tool to support speaking practice without direct supervision. This finding was echoed in interviews. Participant 1, for example, noted that the app allowed her to identify specific pronunciation problems and receive targeted feedback, while Participant 4 emphasized its role in correcting regional pronunciation interference, which aligns with the need for precise articulation in EFL contexts. This supports previous findings by Rizqa Putri et al., (2024), who emphasized that mobile apps provide valuable autonomy and performance support for speaking development.

Ease of use also contributed positively to perception. According to the questionnaire, 80% of respondents found the apps easy to use, flexible, and accessible anytime. In interviews, Participants 3 and 5 mentioned that ELSA Speak's user-friendly interface and daily routines allowed them to incorporate speaking practice into their schedules with minimal effort. These observations are consistent with Rinanda et al., (2019), who found that convenience and interface simplicity were key factors influencing user satisfaction in mobile learning environments.

Feedback quality was another prominent theme. Approximately 75% of participants valued the real-time feedback provided by the app, such as pronunciation scores, colored indicators for errors, and performance tracking. Interview responses reinforced this. Participant 2 appreciated the way ELSA highlighted mispronounced words and provided numerical scores, while Participant 5 explained that he could self-assess intonation, stress, and fluency. This aligns with Rizqa Putri et al., (2024), who found that immediate feedback and native-model references in ELSA Speak improved learners' awareness and accuracy.

Motivational features of the application were also influential. Seventy percent of respondents agreed that gamification and progress monitoring helped them stay motivated. Interviewees confirmed that daily challenges, goal-setting, and point systems fostered consistency.

Participant 2 expressed that the experience felt like playing a game, which encouraged more frequent use. Similar conclusions were drawn by Rinanda et al., (2019) who reported that interactivity and user engagement were major drivers of continued use of MALL tools.

Participants' prior experience with mobile apps also shaped their perceptions. Those who had used similar tools such as Duolingo or Cake reported smoother adaptation and more confidence in using ELSA Speak. Even participants with no prior experience quickly adapted due to the app's intuitive design. As digital natives, many participants—such as Participant 4—felt that mobile learning suited their generational preference for flexible, tech-based environments.

Another emergent theme was flexibility and learning autonomy. Seventy percent of participants agreed that the ability to practice speaking skills at their own pace was one of the app's most valuable advantages. Interviewees described how mobile apps allowed them to study without external pressure. Participant 2 explained that she could repeat exercises as needed, while Participant 3 found the app helpful during tight practicum schedules. These findings reinforce the role of mobile learning in fostering learner-centered environments, as discussed in (Yang, 2013) and (Kukulska-Hulme, 2016).

Interestingly, although confidence was not explicitly addressed in the questionnaire, it became a dominant theme in the interviews. All five participants stated that using ELSA Speak contributed to increased self-confidence in speaking. Participant 1 felt calmer when speaking in public, while Participant 5 reported feeling less anxious practicing with an AI-based app, since it removed the fear of human judgment. This supports (Klimova, 2017) observation that mobile-assisted environments reduce affective barriers and create more positive learning experiences for language learners.

Despite the overall positive responses, some limitations were noted. Around 15% of participants mentioned challenges such as unstable internet connections, occasional errors in pronunciation recognition, and insufficient personalization. Participants 3 and 4 expressed that the app sometimes lacked nuance in natural rhythm or failed to address more complex conversation patterns. These findings suggest that while ELSA Speak is highly effective for basic and intermediate

practice, it may not yet fully replicate the depth of feedback provided by human instructors.

Finally, all interview participants expressed interest in integrating mobile apps into their future classrooms. They saw ELSA Speak not only as a tool for personal language development but also as a valuable supplementary resource for their future students. Participant 1 mentioned that such apps could empower shy learners, while Participant 2 noted that mobile apps could help address time constraints in formal instruction. This indicates that pre-service teachers are beginning to see mobile applications not only as personal learning aids but as pedagogical tools aligned with 21st-century teaching needs.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlight the multifaceted perceptions of pre-service teachers toward the use of mobile applications, particularly ELSA Speak, in enhancing their English speaking skills. The result indicates that factors such as perceived usefulness, ease of use, quality of feedback, motivation, flexibility, confidence building, and teaching intention played crucial roles in shaping these perceptions. These findings confirm and extend existing literature on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by providing context-specific insights from pre-service teachers in a practicum setting.

Firstly, the strong perception of usefulness and effectiveness aligns with previous studies that emphasize how mobile applications assist in overcoming the limitations of traditional speaking instruction (Putri et al., 2021; Rizqa Putri et al., 2024). The majority of participants agreed that ELSA Speak offered a practical solution for improving pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence. As Klimova (2017) notes, MALL environments are especially effective in providing practice opportunities beyond the classroom, allowing learners to rehearse and refine their speaking skills with autonomy. This study reinforces that view by showing how pre-service teachers valued ELSA Speak not only as a learner tool but also as a potential teaching aid.

The role of feedback emerged as a key theme in both the questionnaire and interviews. Participants valued the app's real-time corrective feedback and performance tracking. These results support the findings of (Sholekhah & Fakhurriana, 2023), who emphasized that detailed feedback

enhances learners' pronunciation accuracy and promotes self-regulated learning. The integration of Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) in ELSA Speak allowed participants to receive precise and immediate feedback, which is often lacking in traditional classroom settings. This technology-enabled correction provides a personalized learning experience, as emphasized by Akriono (2024), and helps build learner autonomy.

Ease of use and flexibility were also highly appreciated by participants. Consistent with Viberg et al (2020) mobile applications offer flexibility in terms of time and place, allowing learners to engage with speaking practice during breaks, after class, or in their free time. Participants found that ELSA Speak's intuitive interface reduced barriers to consistent practice. This flexibility is particularly important for pre-service teachers managing teaching practicums, coursework, and personal commitments, suggesting that mobile apps can supplement formal teacher education programs.

Furthermore, the app's motivational and gamified features contributed to learner engagement. Participants noted that elements such as progress scores, daily challenges, and interactive tasks made speaking practice enjoyable and sustainable. This confirms the assertions of Rizqa Putri et al (2024), who found that gamification in mobile learning increases learner motivation and persistence. The positive emotional response toward using the app also addresses affective barriers often associated with speaking, such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes (Shofi & Ainiyah, 2024)

A particularly significant finding of this study is the impact on learner confidence. While not directly measured in the questionnaire, the interview data revealed that participants felt more confident speaking English after consistent use of ELSA Speak. This supports the arguments of Parveen (2016) and Suragih et al (2021), who found that digital feedback tools and AI-driven applications help learners overcome psychological obstacles in speaking. The anonymity and non-judgmental nature of AI feedback seem to create a low-pressure environment conducive to experimentation and practice—key factors in fluency development (Richards & Renandya, 2002)

Interestingly, this study also uncovered the pedagogical intention among participants to

integrate mobile applications into their future classrooms. This is a notable contribution, as it bridges the gap between technology use for personal language development and future professional application. As emphasized Soparno & Tarjana (2021), pre-service teachers' perceptions toward technology play a critical role in whether and how they will adopt such tools in their own teaching. The participants' willingness to use ELSA Speak as a supplemental resource reflects a growing recognition of the role technology can play in enhancing language learning beyond textbook-based instruction.

Despite these positive perceptions, several challenges and limitations were identified, including technical issues (e.g., unstable internet connections), occasional misrecognition in pronunciation feedback, and lack of deeper conversational context. These limitations were also noted in studies by Rizqa Putri et al., (2024) and Soparno & Tarjana, (2021), who observed that while apps like ELSA Speak offer powerful pronunciation tools, they may not fully replace the dynamic interaction and nuanced correction available in teacher-led or peer-based speaking environments.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on MALL by highlighting how mobile applications are perceived by pre-service teachers not only as learning tools but also as future instructional resources. The findings suggest that the integration of mobile apps like ELSA Speak in English education programs can support language development, promote autonomy, and prepare future educators to adopt innovative teaching methods. Furthermore, the study calls for more structured training in mobile technology use during teacher preparation, as well as continuous development of mobile applications to address the pedagogical needs of language learners and educators.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the factors influencing pre-service teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile applications, particularly ELSA Speak, in learning English speaking skills. The findings showed that participants perceived mobile applications as beneficial tools for improving speaking abilities, especially in terms of pronunciation, fluency, motivation, and learner autonomy. Factors such as perceived usefulness,

ease of use, real-time feedback, gamification, prior experience, and learning flexibility were central to shaping these perceptions. Additionally, the use of mobile applications contributed to increased speaking confidence and inspired the intention to integrate similar tools into future teaching practices.

These results indicate that mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) offers considerable potential to support both learner development and pedagogical innovation among future educators. Mobile apps like ELSA Speak are not only effective as supplementary tools for speaking practice but are also perceived as adaptable resources for classroom use. However, technical limitations such as inconsistent internet access and limitations in feedback quality should be addressed to maximize their impact.

The implications of this study suggest that teacher education programs should incorporate digital tool training into their curriculum to prepare pre-service teachers for technology-integrated instruction. Furthermore, app developers and instructional designers are encouraged to enhance personalization and contextualized speaking scenarios within mobile applications. Future research may explore long-term classroom integration and the measurable impact of mobile apps on learners' speaking proficiency in authentic educational settings.

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