

## MOBILE APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS: A NARRATIVE THEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRAK

Keterampilan berbicara merupakan aspek penting dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris karena mencerminkan kemampuan siswa untuk menggunakan bahasa secara nyata dan bermakna. Namun, berbagai penelitian melaporkan bahwa pengembangan keterampilan berbicara masih menghadapi tantangan, seperti keterbatasan kesempatan berlatih, kecemasan saat berbicara, dan rendahnya kepercayaan diri. Perkembangan teknologi mobile menawarkan pendekatan alternatif melalui Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), yang memungkinkan latihan berbicara dilakukan secara fleksibel di luar kelas. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan aplikasi mobile dalam pengembangan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris berdasarkan temuan penelitian sebelumnya. Metode yang digunakan adalah Narrative Thematic Literature Review dengan menganalisis artikel ilmiah relevan dari basis data akademik. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi tiga tema utama, yaitu pengembangan keterampilan berbicara melalui aplikasi mobile, aspek afektif peserta didik dalam latihan berbicara berbasis mobile, dan keterlibatan serta tantangan dalam menjaga keberlanjutan latihan berbicara. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa aplikasi mobile mendukung pembelajaran berbicara yang fleksibel, berulang, dan berpusat pada peserta didik, meskipun keterbatasan dalam interaksi autentik dan keberlanjutan keterlibatan masih perlu dipertimbangkan dalam implementasinya.

**Kata kunci:** Kemampuan Berbahasa Inggris, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Aplikasi Pembelajaran Mobile

### ABSTRACT

*Speaking skills are an important aspect of English language learning because they reflect students' ability to use language in a real and meaningful way. However, various studies report that the development of speaking skills still faces challenges, such as limited opportunities for practice, anxiety when speaking, and low self-confidence. The development of mobile technology offers an alternative approach through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which allows speaking practice to be carried out flexibly outside the classroom. This article aims to review the use of mobile applications in developing English speaking skills based on previous research findings. The method used is a Narrative Thematic Literature Review by analyzing relevant scientific articles from academic databases. The results of the study identified three main themes, namely the development of speaking skills through mobile applications, the affective aspects of learners in mobile-based speaking practice, and the involvement and challenges in maintaining the sustainability of speaking practice. The findings show that mobile applications support flexible, repetitive, and learner-centered speaking learning, although limitations in authentic interaction and sustainability of involvement still need to be considered in their implementation.*

**Keyword:** English Speaking Skills; Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL); Mobile Learning Application

### INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are an important component in English language learning because they reflect learners' ability to use language for real and

meaningful communication. Through speaking skills, learners can convey ideas, share opinions, and interact with others in various contexts. Speaking is an interactive process that involves the direct production and understanding of meaning

(Brown, 2001). In language learning, opportunities for authentic interaction are particularly important because they allow learners to use language functionally while receiving input and feedback during communication (Tran et al., 2024).

Despite its very important role, speaking skills are still one of the most challenging skills for many English learners (Jaelani, A., Rafli, Z., & Murtadho, F., 2025). Students often experience various difficulties, such as limited vocabulary, inaccurate pronunciation, fear of making mistakes, and low self confidence when speaking in front of others. These challenges frequently reduce learners' willingness to communicate orally, especially beyond formal classroom settings. Language anxiety has been widely recognized as a factor that hinders students' speaking performance (Horwitz & Cope, 1986), while insufficient access to authentic speaking practice may hinder the development of oral communication skills (Rao, 2019; Richards, 2006).

In the context of classroom learning, teachers generally implement various speaking activities such as role-play, group discussions, and presentations to develop students' oral skills. Although these activities are beneficial, their implementation is often limited by time constraints and classroom conditions, resulting in limited speaking opportunities for some students. Therefore, students need additional learning support that allows them to practice speaking more frequently and independently outside of formal classroom learning. Continuous and meaningful speaking practice outside the classroom is important for the development of speaking skills effectively (Johan J. Swartz, 2013; Nunan, 2003).

Rapid technological developments, particularly in mobile technology, have opened up new opportunities in language learning. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) allows learners to access learning materials and practice language skills anytime and anywhere, thereby supporting flexibility and autonomy in learning (Kukulska-Hulme 2008). Mobile applications designed for English language learning provide various features such as voice recording, pronunciation practice, interactive speaking tasks, and immediate feedback that support the development of speaking skills. This mobile-based learning environment is also considered less threatening, encouraging learners to practice

speaking with greater confidence (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018; Robert Godwin Jones, 2017).

Previous research shows that mobile applications can effectively support the development of English speaking skills through interactive practice, repetition, and gamified learning activities. Research findings indicate that mobile-based speaking practice contributes to improvements in pronunciation, vocabulary, and speaking fluency, while also enhancing learners' motivation and engagement (Fhonna et al., 2024; Fitria et al., 2023; Tran et al., 2024). However, most existing studies still primarily focus on learning outcomes and measurable skill gains, leaving learners' experiences and engagement during mobile-assisted speaking practice underexplored. Understanding learners' perceptions, reflections, and interactions during mobile-assisted speaking practice is essential to gain deeper insights into technology-enhanced language learning from the learners' perspective (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, this narrative thematic literature review aims to discuss key concepts related to the use of mobile applications for developing English speaking skills by examining learners' engagement, learning processes, and experiential dimensions as reported across previous studies.

## METHOD

### RESEARCH METHOD FRAMEWORK



Gambar 1. Research Method Framework.

This study uses the Narrative Thematic Literature Review method to examine previous studies related to the use of mobile applications for developing English speaking skill. This approach was chosen to organize relevant literature into key themes and

concepts, enabling a structured discussion of how mobile applications are used to support speaking skills development. By focusing on thematic patterns across studies, this review provides a comprehensive overview of existing research while highlighting important issues related to mobile application-supported speaking skill practices.

Literature was collected from relevant academic databases using keywords related to mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), mobile applications, and English speaking skills. Articles were selected based on their relevance to speaking skill development, publication timeframe, and academic quality. The selected studies were then analyzed and grouped based on recurring themes to identify common trends, differences, and gaps in the discussion of mobile applications for developing English speaking skills.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Theme 1: Developing Speaking Skills Through Mobile Applications**

Previous studies have consistently reported that mobile applications support the development of English speaking skills by providing frequent and structured speaking practice outside of the classroom. Speaking is widely understood as an interactive and productive skill that requires continuous exposure, spontaneous language use, and real-time processing, which are often difficult to achieve in a conventional classroom setting (Brown, 2001; Bygate, 1987). Through a mobile app-supported learning environment, learners can practice key aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, vocabulary use, and fluency through repetitive and interactive speaking tasks. These learning conditions allow learners to interact with spoken English more regularly, contributing to a gradual improvement in their speaking performance (Burston, 2013; Fitria et al., 2023).

From a learning process perspective, the development of speaking skills through mobile applications occurs gradually through active use, repetition, and contextual practice. Features such as voice recording, speech recognition, and pronunciation feedback allow learners to monitor their own speaking performance and become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses during practice (Kukulaska-Hulme & Viberg, 2018). This

is in line with the view that speaking skills are developed through active engagement rather than passive knowledge of language rules. As a result, mobile applications support the functional use of language by encouraging learners to apply linguistic knowledge in meaningful speaking tasks that promote fluency and accuracy over time (Nunan, 2003; Thornbury, 2005).

### **Theme 2: Learners' Confidence and Emotional Experience in Mobile-Assisted Speaking**

In addition to linguistic development, many studies emphasize the role of mobile applications in shaping students' emotional experiences during speaking practice. Anxiety about speaking, fear of making mistakes, and lack of confidence are often identified as factors that limit students' willingness to communicate verbally (Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Mobile applications offer a more comfortable and less intimidating environment where learners can practice speaking independently without direct social pressure. This learning context allows learners to repeat speaking tasks, experiment with language use, and gradually build confidence through independent practice (Amaliah, 2019; Kasim, 2024).

The emotional benefits of mobile app-supported speaking practice are further supported by gamification features integrated into many apps. Elements such as points, levels, and progress tracking help learners stay motivated and reduce anxiety associated with speaking activities (Deterding et al., 2011). As learners perceive speaking tasks as enjoyable and manageable, they are more willing to engage in regular practice. As learners perceive speaking tasks as enjoyable and manageable, they are more willing to participate in regular practice. Mobile applications that provide flexible learning opportunities, short speaking tasks, and instant feedback help learners build confidence and reduce anxiety when practising speaking independently. As a result, mobile applications not only contribute to improving speaking skills but also to positive emotional engagement, which plays an important role in maintaining learners' confidence and motivation in speaking English (Fhonna et al., 2024; Handikaningtyas, 2025)

### Theme 3: Learner Engagement and Challenges in Mobile-Assisted Speaking

Another key theme identified in previous studies relates to learner engagement and challenges in mobile-supported speaking practice. Mobile applications provide flexibility that allows learners to decide when and where to practice speaking, supporting independent learning habits and sustained engagement. Features such as short learning tasks, daily practice goals, and personalized feedback make it easier for learners to integrate speaking practice into their daily routines (Gustavo García Botero, 2018; Robert Godwin Jones, 2017). These characteristics indicate that mobile learning environments encourage learner responsibility and autonomy in developing speaking skills (Yuen & Schlote, 2024).

However, some studies highlight challenges that can limit the effectiveness of speaking practice through mobile devices. Limited opportunities for authentic interaction and reliance on structured speaking tasks may reduce spontaneity and communicative depth in speaking activities. While mobile applications are effective for supporting individual and repetitive speaking practice, they may not fully substitute the social interaction required for the development of communicative competence. Therefore, mobile-supported speaking practice is most beneficial when integrated with interactive learning contexts that promote real communication and reflective speaking experiences (Burston, 2013; Rao, 2019).

Overall, the findings of this narrative thematic review indicate that mobile applications play a significant role in supporting the development of English speaking skills from various perspectives. Mobile application-supported speaking practice facilitates the development of speaking skills through flexible and repeated learning opportunities, increases learner confidence by reducing anxiety, and promotes sustained engagement through learner-centered and accessible learning environments. At the same time, challenges related to long-term interaction and engagement highlight the importance of understanding learners' experiences more deeply. These findings suggest that analyzing learners' perspectives provides valuable insights into mobile-assisted language learning that go

beyond measurable learning outcomes (Creswell, 2013; Robert Godwin Jones, 2017).

### CONCLUSION

This narrative thematic literature review confirms that mobile applications play an important role in supporting the development of English speaking skills through flexible, accessible, and learner-centered practices. Findings from various studies show that the use of mobile applications can help improve key aspects of speaking skills, such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and fluency, through repetitive practice and interactive speaking activities. In addition, mobile application-based learning also has a positive impact on the affective aspects of learners, particularly in reducing speaking anxiety and increasing confidence and motivation to learn.

However, this study also identifies challenges in mobile applicationsupported speaking skill development, particularly related to the limitations of authentic interaction and the sustainability of learner engagement in the long term. Although mobile applications encourage independent learning and self-directed practice habits, their effectiveness can be reduced if speaking activities are only structured without being balanced with meaningful communication contexts. Therefore, the use of mobile applications will be more optimal if integrated with a communicative learning approach that allows learners to use language in real-life situations. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the experiences and engagement of learners in mobile-based speaking development and opens opportunities for further research to examine the integration of mobile applications in a more interactive language learning context.

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