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Elsa Speak Application as an Innovation to Improve English Pronunciations of Speaking Skills: Student's Perception

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Abstract

For EFL (English as Foreign Language) students, pronunciation is the most common problem in learning English. Native English speakers have different accents from the accents students use in everyday life. Therefore, students must be able to adjust the accents of foreign speakers with the local accents they often use. In this era of Society 5.0, learning resources are through not only teachers and books. We can also access the internet as a learning resource, one of which is the use of learning applications. This study aims to determine students' perceptions in learning English pronunciation using the ELSA Speak application. ELSA stands for English Language Speech Assistant. This application is used to train students' pronunciation to match the pronunciation of foreign speakers. To analyze the data, researchers used qualitative descriptive methods. The subjects in this study consisted of six high school students. The research instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. Based on our findings, students stated that the ELSA Speak application has a good influence on learning English pronunciation.

Keywords: *ELSA Speak app, pronunciation, speaking skill, society 5.0*

INTRODUCTION

Through Society 5.0, a human-sourced artificial intelligence will transform millions of data collected through the internet in all areas of life. This will become a new wisdom in society. It is undeniable, this transformation will help humans to live a more meaningful life, therefore the ability to speak English in the current era is very important to master as a medium of communication between countries and people from various backgrounds. In this era, having the ability to speak foreign languages, especially English, has become a necessity, especially for those who want to advance in certain fields.

English has become an international lining. Almost every nation uses it to communicate with other nations in the world, including in Indonesia. Each other uses English and can understand each other. However, the dialects they use have differences and it is influenced by the accent of the local language. Like Indians, Thais, Filipinos, or even Indonesians who often use local accents such as Javanese, Sundanese, Minangnese and others. Given that Indonesia has many cultures, therefore many speaking styles are produced. Accents in Indonesia can affect the way students pronounce in speaking English. Bruce Smith, Ann R. Bradlow, and Tessa Bent (2003) entitled *Production and Perception of Temporal Contrasts in Foreign Accented English* state that adults who learn foreign languages generally carry the accent of the mother tongue. Pronunciation is the most important thing in communicating because when we mispronounce a word, it will change the meaning of the word and can cause negative meaning when communicating. The key to successful communication is to be able to speak effectively and articulately which is linked to one's success in life as it occupies an important position both individually and socially (Amiri, Jahedi, & Othman, 2017).

English in Indonesia is a foreign language, therefore Indonesia adheres to the EFL (English Foreign Language) system, and therefore people in Indonesia are not fluent in English. Actually English is understood by most people but some people do not use English to communicate and only a few people dare to communicate fluently with English, this seems to be a problem that has become a common reason is not wanting to speak English because it can't, lack of vocabulary and fear of mispronounce. In fact, to speak English is not from the size of can and cannot and the measure of mastering vocabulary, but the ability to speak English is from the willingness to brave. A very appropriate way is to force you to be brave and try to apply speaking English to daily activities.

Society 5.0 is a concept in life that is new to society (Khoiroh, 2023). Through the concept of society 5.0, people's lives are expected to be more comfortable and sustainable. People will be provided with products and services in the quantity and at the time needed. People are faced with technology that allows access in cyberspace. In the field of education in the era of society 5.0, students in the learning process are directly faced with robots (applications) specifically designed to replace educators or controlled by educators remotely. It is not impossible that the teaching and learning process can occur anywhere and anytime, whether it is with a teacher or not. So many technologies can be downloaded from the internet to be used as English language learning, especially to improve pronunciation skills, one of

which is the ELSA Speak application. Anggraini (2022) mentioned that the formation of ELSA speak was designed by Vu Van in 2015 in San Francisco, United States. The formation of the ELSA speak application itself by combining artificial intelligence and voice recognition components to help improve the quality of pronunciation in English.

Almost all students now have smart phones that they can use to access the internet. They should utilize the internet for positive purposes. We also contribute to directing its students to use the internet productively. One of them is to introduce them to application resources that they can use as English learning media. Authors will use the ELSA Speak program to improve students' pronunciation. The purpose of this study was to improve students' pronunciation practice in speaking.

Along with the development of educational technology, it also develops and affects learning and teaching activities. Many technologies that can be used as a means of supporting learning coupled with internet access make it easier for students to get extensive knowledge. With the development of the system contained in a smartphone, now we can enjoy the many features and applications that can be downloaded on our smartphone. Thus, we can use the application as a means to support learning, especially in learning English. At this time, many applications can help us learn about pronunciations, vocabulary, grammar, speaking, listening, reading, writing and much more.

In this article, we will discuss about one application that can be used to improve speaking skills, especially to improve English pronunciation, the application is ELSA Speak: English Learning Speech Assistant (ELSA) designed by Vu Van in 2015 in San Francisco, United States. The app leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI) and speech recognition to help improve and perfect English pronunciation.



Picture 1. ELSA Speak Application Symbol

The ELSA Speak application can detect user mispronunciation in users with more than 95% accuracy. The app can also receive advanced feedback

to correct mispronunciations. This feature is one of the things that distinguish ELSA from other applications. That way the existence of this application is expected to help students to improve learning to speak English properly and correctly, by paying attention to every pronunciation in each word because a word that is mispronounced eating will change the meaning of the word.

METHOD

This research design uses qualitative descriptive research methods. Designed to explore students' perceptions of using the ELSA Speak app in learning vocabulary pronunciation in English speaking skill. The population in this study consisted of high school students from several different schools. Meanwhile, the sample of this study was grade 11 students, with a total of 6 students. Selected through purposive sampling. Taking into consideration that students have used the ELSA Speak application as a learning medium to improve the pronunciation of vocabulary in English subjects before.

In data collection, researchers used a questionnaire consisting of 15 questions. The questions the researchers asked were based on teaching how to pronounce EFL/ESL. Designed to look at five main points: content, pedagogical assessment/flexibility, multimedia and automatic pronunciation recognition design.

The answer pattern used for statements is 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. These criteria are clearly outlined in Table 1. Researchers used Google Forms to collect data from students. The students' responses to the instrument are calculated according to the score of the answers given, and then the percentage is calculated and displayed in table form.

Table 1. Scorer Criteria

Score Interval	Category
1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Undecided
4	Agree
5	Strongly Agree

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The answer pattern used for statements is 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree. These criteria are clearly outlined in Table 1. Researchers used Google Forms to collect data from students. The students' responses to the instrument are calculated

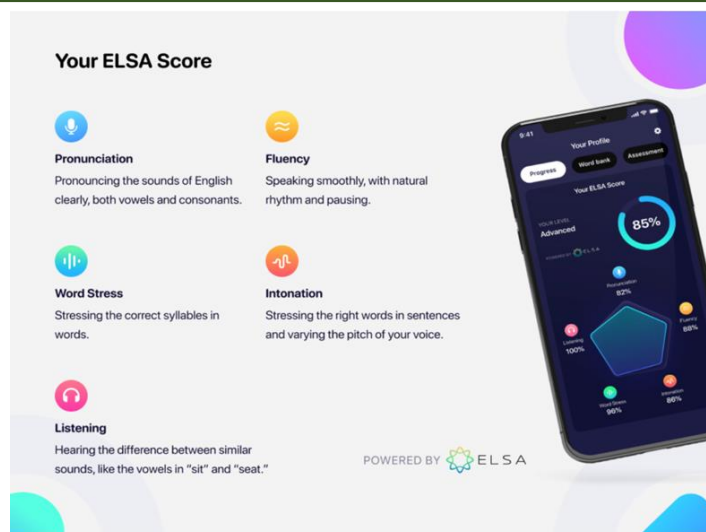
according to the score of the answers given, and then the percentage is calculated and displayed using a diagram.

In the results and discussion, it was found that some students had different perceptions on each aspect of the questions presented by the researchers. Some descriptions of the results of each aspect will be explained as follows.

Table 2. Categorizing students' perceptions of the use of the ELSA Speak application in content aspects

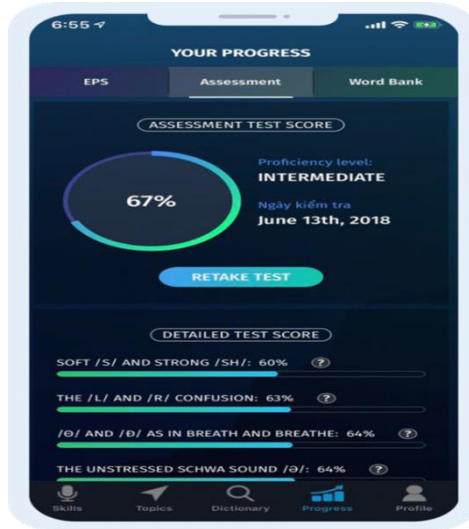
Scorer	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	0	0%
2	Disagree	0	0%
3	Undecided	0	0%
4	Agree	0	0%
5	Strongly Agree	6	100%

Based on the table above, it can be concluded that all respondents agreed that the ELSA Speak application has excellent quality in terms of content presented in learning materials. Thus, it can be interpreted that the program contained in the ELSA Speak application discusses content that is in accordance with the purpose and with the level of proficiency. In addition, the ELSA Speak application also discusses vowel sounds, diphthongs, syllables, emphasis of words or sentences, connecting each word, and good pronunciation intonation. Respondents also added that the ELSA Speak application has very interesting content in learning pronunciation that is trained directly by native English speaking tutors. The appearance and content contained in the ELSA Speak application are shown in figure 2 and 3 below.



Picture 2. Look screen of ELSA Speak application

Based on figure 2 above is an example of the screen display that users will see when users open the ELSA speak application. In this application, users can choose 5 features so that students or users can learn English more easily like native language users. We can see this in figure 2. The first feature is Pronunciations, which is a feature that serves to make it easier for users to pronounce clearly in both vowel and consonant. The second feature is fluency that students can use so that students feel fluent speaking smoothly with neutral rhythm and pausing. The third feature is word stress, which serves for stressing and syllables in words. The fourth feature, intonation, functions so that students can manage stressing in the right words in sentences and varying the pitch of your voice. Furthermore, the fifth feature is listening which functions to hear the difference between similar sounds like the vowel "sit" and "seat". All features can be used easily so that students love learning English.



Picture 3. Look Screen of ELSA Speak app display

In picture display 3. It can be seen that the ELSA speak application can also measure the extent of the user's ability to learn English, especially in speaking skills both in pronunciation and others. In the ELSA speak application, users can also see where they are at. Such as they are beginner level, intermediate level or already at an advanced level. Therefore, this can make it easier for users to find out the extent of their potential in learning English.

Table 3. Categorizing students' perceptions of the use of the ELSA Speak application in pedagogical aspects

Scorer	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	0	0 %
2	Disagree	0	0 %
3	Undecided	0	0 %
4	Agree	3	50 %
5	Strongly Agree	3	50%

The table above shows that 50% of respondents agree and 50% strongly agree that the pedagogical aspects of the ELSA Speak application are very good. The table above can be assumed that the students agree and assume the application has sensor recognition of differences in vowel and consonant sounds. In addition, in this application can display and distinguish grammatical and semantic intonation patterns. The learning order presented is also neatly arranged and sequential. Instructions and explanations of how to pronounce are well explained and easy to understand.

Table 4. Categorizing students' perceptions of the use of the ELSA Speak application in the aspect of assessment/flexibility

Scorer	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	0	0 %
2	Disagree	0	0 %
3	Undecided	3	50 %
4	Agree	3	50 %
5	Strongly Agree	0	0%

In table 4, 3 respondents or 50% of respondents expressed doubts about the accuracy of the assessment method or the flexibility of the accent research that respondents said. While 50% of respondents agreed that, the ELSA Speak application has a good way of assessing when recording or detecting mistakes made by respondents by displaying the test results. The view on the assessment aspect is shown in figure 4.



Figure 4. Display of assessment results on the ELSA Speak App

Table 6. Categorizing students' perceptions of the use of the ELSA Speak application on the design aspects of automatic pronunciation recognition.

Scorer	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Strongly disagree	0	0 %
2	Disagree	0	0 %
3	Undecided	3	50 %
4	Agree	3	50 %
5	Strongly Agree	0	0%

In the design aspect of automatic pronunciation recognition, 50% of respondents expressed hesitation because there was a lack of explanatory videos on pronunciation methods namely the absence of Indonesian subtitles explaining what the tutor explained. Another 50% agree that the ELSA Speak app has a good automatic pronunciation design by providing automatic feedback, the display shown in figure 5.



Figure 5. Automatic pronunciation recognition design ELSA Speak App

Based on the overall results of the questionnaire regarding students' perceptions of using the ELSA Speak application, it showed that 85% of the 15 questions asked agreed and considered that this application has many advantages when using the application. Thus, it can be stated that the ELSA Speak application is an excellent application to support learning how to pronounce vocabulary in English.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the findings and discussion above, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of the use of the ELSA Speak application have a positive impact on improving the ability of English pronunciation in high school students. Based on these results, it can be stated that the ELSA Speak application can be used as a means of learning how to pronounce good English with all aspects of learning that have reached good categories in every aspect of assessment.

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