“...I Felt More Challenged to Keep Practicing”: An Exploration of the Students’ Voice towards Elsa Speak for Supplementing Students’ Speaking Willingness

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Abstract
This study aims at discovering out the students’ perceptions about using Elsa Speak in learning English. Sources of data for this study were 15 junior high school students. In collecting data, the researcher spread the questionnaires by using Google Forms format and the researcher used an interview to support the questionnaire result towards the students’ voice in utilizing Elsa Speak. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS software. The results show that students have a fairly positive perception towards the use of Elsa Speak in learning English. It indicates that students like the use of Elsa Speak in learning process, they can read the words, phrases, and situational sentence patterns themselves and then be assessed and corrected by ELSA’s artificial intelligence, they can find out how much they can pronounce sentences according to native standards. Students also get many advantages with Elsa Speak.

Keywords
Students’ voice
Elsa Speak
Speaking willingness
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Introduction

There is a growing body of literature that recognizes the importance of media in learning process, such as the use of technologies to support successful learning. It cannot be separated from the linkages of globalization which have a major influence on many sectors of life, especially the world of education. It is in line with Otchie & Pedaste (2020) that in the last decade, mixed media, learning and the widespread use of computer-based collaborative techniques in social media (SM) have received much attention. While Papadakis & Kalogiannakis (2022) argued that electronic equipment, specifically communication technology and information, delivered the latest products, developing the features they have expand with the recent technology to be used as an aid in the learning of field training and development in other areas. Educational media is one of the technologies that can influence education. It is a process exchange of science and capability, the exchange of information that happens among students and teachers. Wherein teachers are resources of information, students are receiver of information and the medium is a means of presenting learning thought and materials. (Ashari et al., 2020, Widodo et al., 2018, Murtafiah, 2020).

At the same time, the need for the media as a means of communication in English is also needed. It is to avoid misunderstanding between the speaker and the interlocutor. So, proficiency of pronunciation really needs to be considered. Unfortunately, English foreign language (EFL) students face distinct difficulties that hinder about achieving the goals in mastering the English language, whereas, students of each foreign language must acquire pronunciation as one of them basic skills for successful communication in this foreign language. Saleh & Gilakjani (2021) stated that said that pronunciation is an important part of speaking language essential for effective communication. Pronunciation can be learned by repeating the sounds and correcting students when they made mistakes. Nevertheless, learning the proper pronunciation can be a problematic way because it involves learning to articulate the newest unknown sounds. Students should be subjected to intensive training of their articulatory organs to correctly use the new places of articulation, namely when the student's mother tongue is a different system than the target language. Suryaleksana et al. (2022) Argued that because pronunciation has a lot to do with speaking and communication, it becomes a major problem for English students as they face every day in English conversation with lecturers and peers. Therefore, the pronunciation is very affects the success of speech.

Because technology is getting more sophisticated, there are many special media to guide students in achieving their pronunciation goals. According to Ismail et al. (2019) learning medium is generally digital based learning and it can be searched wherever and any place. The learning activity does not only take place in the
classroom, however, the students can access it outside by using online educational application. There are several methods that have been proven in solving the problems of suspended students and enhancing their speaking skills, inside and outside the classroom, ideas and tactics include the use of social media like Facebook application, WhatsApp application, YouTube, etc. (Ying et al., 2021). Thus, it supports students to engage in learning with the media used and it can be believed that students will enthusiastic during the learning process. According to Samad & Aminullah (2019) using appropriate teaching aids can help students overcome the wrong pronunciation.

ELSA (English Learning Speech Assistant) Speak is one of the applications that can be used on the internet. This application can be downloaded in the play/app store on mobile phones. This application can be used to learn to speak by applying artificial intelligence and speech recognition. Elsa Speak helps students to speak fluently and confidently, because in this application students can pronounce words and several sentences and there are corrections if their pronunciation is wrong. It is in line with Anggraini (2022) that Vu Van was created ELSA software and it is one of digital based learning that used in San Francisco, California. It uses speech, recognition technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to support and refine English pronunciation. Elsa Speak users can use speech recognition technology to help them pronounce English. Elsa Speak app offers more courses and topics, starting with practicing English words, phrases and sentences. The interactive dictionary is another element of Elsa Speak that teaches users how to pronounce the word or phrase they need. According to Kholis (2021) Elsa Speak is rated mobile language knowledge. It supports the learning becomes a two sides. For example, when learners are pronouncing syllables or sentences, the Elsa Speak software will analyze and provides corrective feedback. It is in line with Ismail & Sarmita (2020) that Elsa Speak consists of various components to raise students' pronunciation or students’ English accent by guiding them to pronounce a word/phrase/sentence precisely with different exercise. This application is equipped with a microphone icon that authorizes the learner to practice speaking as if the voice were being listened to.

In this application, students can choose their ability grade from a beginner to an advanced stage. For instance, in the pronunciation practice section, there are seven levels those are; introduction to the sounds, warming up, getting in a groove, building momentum, practice makes perfect, staying consistent, digging in and finally there is a final test to find out how far students are capable after going through several stages of practice. Besides that, Elsa Speak allows learners to acquire knowledge of its scope pronunciation as like phonetics and phonology, students also learn how words are written and pronounced correctly (Kholis, 2021). According to Becker & Edalatishams (2019) users can listen to the pronunciation provided of the item sound and they can record their voice. ELSA sets a record resolution and gives feedback on right and wrong pronunciations. The correct pronunciation produces a bell that tracks the score up to 100. In Elsa Speak, students can explore pronunciation easily that created by native speakers and they can practice their pronunciation, if their pronunciation were wrong, they will get digital corrective feedback from Elsa Speak. Learners can practice independently and regulate their own learning to keep up with the fast changing world and support them to survive in the global society (Suragihi et al., 2021).

To support the explanation above, Becker & Edalatishams (2019) argued that ELSA’s basic user interface is simple and offers navigation between subjects and
expertise, grades, reports, and other purposes. Users can arrange a display language (English, Vietnamese or Japan, good target audience indicators for this application), depending on the ability of the user level. Skills contain exercises such as opening and closing sounds, minimal pairs, schwa, th-sounds and consonant clusters. Applied linguists usually refer to segmental phonemes, single sounds within word topics include food, entertainment, technology, culture, everyday conversations and relationships among many others. Hence, this application offers many benefits, and it is in accordance to what has been described by Aswaty & Indari (2022) such as; This program uses a proprietary artificial intelligence (AI) including automatic speech recognition (ASR) to supply user pronunciation accuracy, students can select a subject based on several lessons, each lesson is marked as a qualification level and includes various speeches and listening opportunities, users can listen to the words that have been spoken by the speaker in the application and then record their own sound independently, Elsa Speak prescribes accuracy register and provides correct and incorrect pronunciations feedback.

Many researchers examined the effectiveness of this application such as the research conducted by Pinontoan et al. (2022), Triwardani & Azi (2022), Kholis (2021), and Aswaty & Indari (2022). Based on several previous studies, many of them tested this application to increase student scores through pre-tests and post-tests that had been designed. For this reason, this study is more focused on knowing how students perceive Elsa Speak in classroom learning, whether they have a positive view or vice versa.

Method

This study employed descriptive quantitative. The researcher spread a questionnaire through Google form in collecting data to find out the students' voice about Elsa Speak application as a learning tool. It is needed to know the progress of students' pronunciation in speaking English as a foreign language. The instrument of this study is Students’ Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) and an interview. The instrument is adapted from the study conducted by Barus & Simanjuntak (2020) that consisted of 15 items and those were assessed using Likert scale. Response to every item is based on a scale from 1 to 4, which is 1 means Strongly Disagree, 2 means Disagree, 3 means Agree and 4 means Strongly Agree. The instrument consists of 6 indicators, namely convenience, content, the efficiency of use, language, clarity, and fun to use.

The researcher used an online questionnaire through Google Form because it was easier, more practical, and it could reach many participants. After collecting data, the researcher analyzed it by using SPSS. The participants in this research are 15 senior high school students who have experienced using Elsa Speak application in learning English.

Results

In this section, the researcher presents finding analysis about ELT students’ perspective in the form of a table. The table indicates the descriptive analysis of convenience, content, the efficiency of use, language, clarity, and fun to use towards Elsa Speak application. The findings are as follows:
Table 1. The descriptive analysis of the items
Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The comfort-ability of online media</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The comfort-ability of direct use/ instant connected</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The addition of insight knowledge</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The suitability students’ daily lives</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The accuracy of material substance</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The suitability of Elsa Speak in expected need</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The materials are update</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The efficiency of time and needs</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The clarity of spelling</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The accuracy of the English grammar</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The use of effective language</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The simplicity of materials</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The understandable sentences of each text</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The based learning has many entertainment</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The collaboration between students</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.516</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The highest mean is indicated by item 13 which is “The understandable sentences of each text” and the lowest mean is indicated by item 15 which is “The collaboration between students”. The second highest mean is shown by item 9 which is “The clarity of spelling”. The data findings shows that students have a positive perception towards Elsa Speak because the sentence of each text in the application was understandable and it gave the clarity of spelling that can help students in enhancing their pronunciation to support their speaking, even though they give reaction that they cannot collaborate with their pair because Elsa Speak provides individual practice by correcting each person’s pronunciation. However, students can still enjoy of using Elsa Speak in their learning. It is clearly shown in the table that each item has a value above or equal to 3.0 which means students give a positive reaction towards the use of Elsa Speak in their learning process.

The data above is consistence with the students’ voice towards Elsa Speak. Four participants were interviewed based on 6 indicators and they provided the response listed below:

1. The appropriate of comfort

Participant 1:

_Elsa Speak is very practical and easy to operate so I don't feel confused when I learn to use Elsa Speak even though this application requires an adequate internet network._

2. The appropriate of content

Participant 2:

_I just realized that there are many applications that can be used to upgrade my skills in communicating using English. After using Elsa Speak I often practice alone in my room and I think I find new friends to communicate with._

Participant 3:

_I always thought English was very difficult, especially speaking activity, I was always afraid of saying the wrong word, but after using Elsa Speak I felt more challenged to keep practicing and I was more courageous to express what was on my mind._

3. The appropriate of efficient use

Participant 4:

_Elsa makes me easy in learning English because the sentences that appear in the application are suitable with my learning needs and the application covers everyday conversation and vocabulary._

Participant 5:

_The materials and components in Elsa Speak are updated so that I, as a user, can get the benefit from it, such as providing feedback in the form of word pressure and voice intonation._
4. The appropriate of language

Participant 6:

*I am a beginner in speaking, especially pronunciation, but Elsa Speak has a clear pronunciation feature, so that I can easily imitate what the speaker says.*

5. The appropriate of clarity

Participant 7:

*The words and sentences that are exemplified in Elsa Speak are very simple and understandable so that it is easy for me to understand the context.*

6. The appropriate of fun to use

Participant 8:

*Elsa Speak gives me ease and more learning opportunities. My speech was immediately corrected and revised, as a native would say. I have a lot of vocabulary and practice.*

It is clear that students really like Elsa Speak as a medium in their learning. This application contributes to students' English progress. Students can read the words, phrases, and situational sentence patterns themselves and then be assessed and corrected by Elsa's artificial intelligence. Students can find out how much they can pronounce sentences according to native standards. According to the results of interview, it also can be concluded that the students think the Elsa Speak software's content design is good. Therefore, we can assume that the program also compares various consonant and vowels sounds. Additionally, it displays and identifies both grammatical and semantic intonation patterns. The program employs transcriptions and phonetic symbols. Additionally, the materials present in Elsa Speak are based on chronological order. In terms of the exercise, it focuses on producing noises and directions clearly.

**Discussion**

The section contains the discussion related to the data taken, and it was denoted that most of the students had positive view of the use of Elsa Speak in their English teaching and learning process. The result is in accordance with the research finding by Samad & Aminullah (2019) that students have a positive perception towards Elsa Speak, they feel that Elsa Speak is very good to use in pronunciation practice. They assume that this program is very well designed on its content, assessment/flexibility, multimedia and automatic speech appreciation. It is also good in terms of features pedagogical design. It could happen because Elsa Speak provides very interesting features. It is in line with the statement said by Anggraini (2022) in their research that that Elsa Speak app allows students to learn pronunciation easier and faster. It is especially useful for immediate repairs and feedback. Students demonstrate this as they learn to utter words. This also corresponded with Samad & Aminullah (2019) that Elsa Speak app is good application for pronunciation learning because it has many suitable components related to the English proficiency level, just like vowel and consonant sounds, diphthongs, syllabic, and word stress can be the reference for learning.
In essence, teacher has a significant role in providing opportunities for learners to be active in learning and support it with teaching and learning innovation in order learning goals will be successful. It is supported by Darsih & Asikin (2020) who stated that when we talk about mobile devices and their closer relationship with teaching and learning innovation, the importance of mobile applications (apps) as useful tools and acquisition for specific learning cannot be ignored.

In addition, the data collection on appropriate of content (items 3 to 6) shows that even though the accuracy of the material substance has a low average value, but students think that Elsa Speak is compatible with students’ daily lives and Elsa Speak is in accordance with students' needs. This is evidenced by the majority of students agree with these points. This finding is consistent with Darsih et al. (2021) that the whole score of the students’ answers was 86.5%. It means that it belongs in the fully consent category. It shows more than half students were like the content of the Elsa Speak app. Thus, it can be concluded that according to the learners, the design of the Elsa Speak application is very adequate, such as audio, phonetic transcription, vocabulary, conversational voice. Elsa Speak app is capable to help students and encourage them to practice the pronunciation. This is also in line with the research conducted by Akhmadi & Munawir (2022) that the results of the questionnaire indicate that 82% belongs to the Good category. It means that students are interested in using Elsa Speak and have a positive attitude. In other words, this application can be used to improve students’ pronunciation ability; the available material is easy to understand and simple for students to use. While the research result conducted by Silaen & Rangkuti (2021) shows that the research reveals that Elsa Speak Application is a beneficial app that can be used to learn pronunciation in Mixed Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Further data explains about the appropriate of efficient use, the appropriate of language, and of appropriate of clarity (items 7 to 13). The data proves that the average value reaches 3.0. It means that students agree that the material contains in Elsa Speak is update, the spelling in Elsa Speak is clear, Elsa Speak has the accuracy of English grammar, Elsa Speak use an effective language, and Elsa Speak has understandable sentences of each text. And the last is the discussion about fun of use regarding to the use of Elsa Speak (items 14 o 15). The finding indicates that even though Elsa Speak does not provide opportunities for students to collaborate because the system in Elsa Speak is specifically for individual practice, but this application provides features that can entertain students so that they are more interested in learning English.

Conclusion

The achievement of learning objectives is caused by several factors, one of which is the selection of appropriate learning tools by the teacher. In this research, the researcher tried to investigate the role of using Elsa Speak in learning and the students’ voice towards this learning tool. The output of the study indicated that most students had a positive perspective on using Elsa Speak. So, we can assume that Elsa Speak is a tool that suitable for teaching English. This can be seen in the responses of the students. They feel that Elsa Speak helps them learn effectively. The great role of teachers cannot be forgotten here. In other words, teachers should try to make their lessons attractive and comprehensive, both visually and substantively.
This research is limited by the number of participants, so it is very possible to expand on the findings considering the importance of using Elsa Speak to attract students' interest in the learning process.

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