

The Use of ELSA Speak as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) towards EFL Students' Pronunciation

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses how students' pronunciation can be improved through the use of the ELSA Speak as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool. ELSA stands for "English Language Speech Assistant." The speech recognition function of ELSA Speak is powered by artificial intelligence (AI), and it provides users with feedback to help them improve their pronunciation, which improves their ability to speak English. This study investigates the influence and potential of the ELSA Speak application on the acquisition of pronunciation by employing a qualitative research method and a strategy that relies on library research. The findings highlight the significance of having an excellent content design, an efficient pedagogical and instructional design, gamified learning elements, automatic voice recognition technology, a secure learning environment, and individualized digital feedback. The findings of the study indicate that there is considerably significant potential for the ELSA Speak application to help students improve their pronunciation skills. The consequences of this research emphasize the necessity of utilizing cutting-edge mobile applications for language learning and highlight the possible benefits for students who are interested in improving their pronunciation proficiency.

Keywords: Elsa Speak; Mobile-Assisted Language Learning; Students' Pronunciation; Pronunciation Improvement.

INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is considered one of the most challenging aspects of learning a language, as it can be essential for effective communication. The ability of pronouncing words accurately is even more important for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students due to how it directly affects the student's ability to communicate effectively. Pronunciation is crucial since speakers typically have limited time to think and fix their

mistakes when speaking (Rafael, 2019). Based on previous research, pronunciation errors happened due to several factors, such as mother language interference, insufficient chance to use English in daily life, being unconfident to speak English, and being passive learners (Adila & Refnaldi, 2019).

The utilization of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools in language education has been receiving a lot of attention nowadays (Santiana, et al., 2021; Santiana and Marzuki, 2022) and presents fresh chances for enhancing pronunciation and language learning. Technological developments offer a variety of technologies that can be used to support learning and teaching activities (Santiana, et al., 2021; Dewi, et al., 2022). ELSA Speak, one of the numerous language learning programs out there, has shown promise towards assisting EFL students to overcome their pronunciation difficulties. For instance, ELSA Speak is a mobile application that is intended to assist people that are not native English speakers in improving their pronunciation and speaking abilities in English. It stands for "English Language Speech Assistant," and it makes use of cutting-edge speech recognition technology in conjunction with artificial intelligence to provide practice exercises and personalized feedback.

The approach utilized by ELSA Speak is based on the conviction that clear and precise pronunciation is one of the most important factors in successful communication. The app's goal is to improve users' confidence as well as their fluency in spoken English by assisting them in overcoming any difficulties they may have with pronunciation. The ultimate goal is to give non-native speakers the ability to communicate more effectively and with greater confidence in a wide variety of settings, whether it is in everyday conversation, professional or academic settings, or academic settings alone.

Previous studies have demonstrated that the program ELSA Speak is an excellent tool that could potentially be utilized to make improvements towards one's pronunciation. The use of the ELSA Speak application has been proven to have a significant effect in enhancing students' pronunciation skills, as shown by studies carried out by Ahmad & Munawir (2022). The results of these studies were found to be in line with one another. It might be associated with the features where students can practice their pronunciation and receive individualized feedback and direction from the app based on its sophisticated algorithms and artificial intelligence. It also provides a wide variety of exercises and practice resources that target various parts of pronunciation, such as vowel sounds, consonant sounds, intonation, stress patterns, and word connections. These exercises and practice materials target specific aspects of pronunciation. As a result, students can learn independently and organize their learning with the assistance of this application and special learning styles to keep up with the quickly changing world and survive in a global society. For such reasons, this study, aligned with Rinaepi and Azi (2022), believes that ELSA Speak has the potential to improve students' attitudes as well as their levels of motivation due to its interesting features (Rinaepi and Azi, 2022).

Furthermore, ELSA Speak equips non-native English speakers with the tools they need to take charge of their journey toward improved pronunciation by providing them with a wide selection of exercises and practice activities. The application aids users to achieve a more proper and natural-sounding pronunciation by giving targeted guidance and personalized feedback. As a result, users improve their general English-speaking ability.

The focus of this study is to explore the efficiency and practical effectiveness of Elsa Speak when it comes to language teaching environments, with a specific emphasis on improving pronunciation for EFL students. This study aims to provide information on the practical application of Elsa Speak in improving pronunciation abilities among EFL learners as well as its effectiveness and practical suggestions for pronunciation learning through an in-depth library research analysis.

METHOD

The study is based on a library research method to explore how the Elsa Speak application can be used for student pronunciation training as a mobile solution that allows users to learn languages with their phones. The study of libraries includes systematic searching, selection and analysis of relevant sources in the areas of literature, research studies or educational resources available in academic databases and libraries.

To facilitate the search and review of literature, researchers start by developing research questions. These questions ask whether Elsa Speak can be effective in improving EFL students' pronunciation, its effect on EFL learners, best practices for the implementation and any issues or limitations that arise as a result of using Elsa Speak.

The researchers conduct a comprehensive search across various online databases, such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, SINTA, and other reputable sources. The researchers employ keywords and search terms like "Elsa Speak," "pronunciation," "Mobile-Assisted Language Learning," "EFL students," and related terms to identify relevant literature. The selection criteria for the literature review include the relevance of the source to the research topic, the credibility of the authors and publication, and the recency of the publication.

When the researcher has finished collecting the relevant papers, books, and research studies, the next step is to conduct an in-depth analysis and synthesis of the findings, concepts, and perspectives that are offered in the sources. The researchers analyse the usage of Elsa Speak as a MALL tool for learning pronunciation and find common themes, major arguments, theoretical frameworks, and empirical evidence relevant to this topic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion from the study that analyses the use of ELSA Speak as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool for enhancing students' pronunciation are presented in the part that follows.

The Use Elsa Speak Towards Students' Pronunciation

One tool that can be used to acquire and enhance pronunciation abilities is ELSA Speak. On the Google Play Store and App Store, users can download this program for free. For learning pronunciation and speaking, ELSA Speak provides some captivating and useful features. One of the features of this app is automatic speech recognition. This feature allows users to get instant feedback when they are practicing.

In addition, the attractive app design and gamification approach used in this app are also features that make the learning process more interesting. Many people have utilized ELSA Speak to improve their speaking and pronouncing abilities. Numerous studies have been done that prove the significance of ELSA Speak. According to the findings of a study that was carried out by Aswaty and Indari (2022), the application known as ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) had a substantial impact on the speaking abilities of students.

The Benefits of Elsa Speak towards Students' Pronunciation

Content Design

ELSA Speak lays a lot of emphasis on giving students a thorough way to improve their pronunciation skills. By using several features, the program's content design seeks to produce an enjoyable and productive learning experience. ELSA Speak offers interactive tasks that actively include students in the learning process. These drills could ask users to imitate native speakers, repeat phrases, sentences, or conversations, or practice particular sounds or intonation patterns. The interactive format of these activities encourages participation and aids in the development of pronunciation abilities in a useful and entertaining manner.

The application also uses speech recognition technology, which is essential for giving students timely and precise feedback. The speech recognition system examines users' pronunciation as they talk into the app and compares it to models for native speakers. With the use of this feedback, students may pinpoint their areas of weakness and immediately make changes to enhance their pronunciation. ELSA Speak includes gamification components that enhance the learning process and motivate students. Gamification is the use of game-like elements to promote a sense of accomplishment and competition, such as awards, badges, levels, or leaderboards. Learners are encouraged to continue honing their pronunciation skills by collecting rewards and moving up the stages.

Another essential element of ELSA Speak is customized feedback. Additionally, the application also gives a clear explanation of the usage of diphthongs, vowel sounds, consonant sounds, word and sentence stress, syllabic constituent, prominence, and intonation (Sarmita and Aminullah, 2019). This feedback is personalized to meet the needs of each learner, allowing them to concentrate on the areas that need the most improvement.

Pedagogical and Instructional Design

The research conducted by Sarmita and Aminullah (2019) indicates that the ELSA Speak program provides an integrated approach to the problem of incorrect pronunciation. Learners will be able to detect and identify between the various vowel sounds and consonant sounds since the application places a specific emphasis on contrasting the various sounds of each. Users can gain a more precise and nuanced knowledge of these sounds with the assistance of the app, which does this by offering opportunities for practice and explicit instruction. In addition to this, ELSA Speak is capable of displaying and identifying grammatical as well as semantic intonation patterns. The fluctuation of pitch in spoken language is referred to as intonation, and it is a means of communicating meaning and expression. Learners are better able to comprehend the complexities of intonation and the role it plays in communication since the app can highlight and explain many patterns of intonation. Furthermore, the program also provides transcriptions and phonetic symbols, which serve as visual aids to support learners in understanding and reproducing accurate pronunciation. Phonetic symbols offer a standardized way to express individual sounds, whereas transcriptions provide a written representation of spoken words or sentences. Transcriptions provide a written representation of spoken words or sentences. Learners' phonological awareness is improved, and they have an easier time appropriately producing sounds.

When it comes to the workouts that ELSA Speak offers, both the sounds and the instructions are produced distinctly. Because of this clarity, students are guaranteed to be able to hear and comprehend the target sounds, which paves the way for them to properly practice and imitate those sounds. Learners are helped by clear instructions

since they are better able to follow the exercises and comprehend the particular goals or strategies that are being addressed.

According to Sarmita and Aminullah (2019), the overarching goal of the design of ELSA Speak was to produce an environment that paves the way for easier comprehension of the material being studied. The application provides learners with an organized and user-friendly platform for improving their English pronunciation by contrasting the sounds of vowels and consonants, highlighting intonation patterns, utilizing transcriptions and phonetic symbols, and providing clear instructions.

Gamified Learning

Khampusaen et al. (2023) claim that ELSA Speak makes use of gamification components to improve the learning process and make it more engaging and entertaining for users. Gamification is the process of incorporating game concepts and features into non-game environments, including educational apps, to engage and inspire users. Gamification is used in the case of ELSA Speak to generate a sense of competitiveness and motivation among users. Users can track their progress and assess how they are performing in comparison to other users using the app's awards, accomplishments, and leaderboards. Users are motivated to keep using the program and improving their pronunciation skills by earning rewards, achieving accomplishments, and seeing their names on leaderboards. Young users who are frequently motivated by challenges, prizes, and competitiveness may find the introduction of gamification aspects particularly enticing. Users may increase their practice frequency and work toward improving their pronunciation out of a sense of accomplishment and a desire to surpass others.

Gamification brings excitement and interest to the learning process, which is how ELSA Speak does it. It changes the process of learning a language from a potentially boring task into an engaging learning activity. As a result, users may become more enthusiastic and dedicated about using the app frequently, which over time may lead to better pronunciation abilities. It's vital to remember that everyone's experience with gamification will be different, and different users may find it more or less inspiring. However, the inclusion of gamification elements in ELSA Speak seeks to improve the overall user experience and make the language learning process more enticing and fun (Khampusaen et al., 2023).

Automatic Speech Recognition

To give users rapid feedback on their pronunciation, ELSA Speak uses automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology (Sarmita and Aminullah, 2019). The application uses ASR technology to analyse user speech and compare it to models of native speakers, giving immediate feedback on numerous pronunciation, rhythmic, intonation, and pace issues.

Users of ELSA Speak can get immediate feedback on how well they pronounce words using ASR technology. Users can make corrections and changes right away by using this feedback to spot areas in which they might be struggling or making mistakes. Instant feedback is extremely helpful since it enables users to focus on specific pronunciation issues and improve their speech to sound more correct and natural. Users also have the opportunity to modify the automated speech recognition using the program. This means that users can change the ASR system's settings or parameters to better suit their distinctive pronunciation requirements. ELSA Speak ensures that the ASR technology adjusts to the users' unique pronunciation issues and preferences by offering this customization capability, further improving the accuracy and efficacy of the feedback given.

Safe Learning Environment

ELSA Speak provides users with a safe and non-judgmental learning environment for enhancing their English-speaking abilities (Saragih et al., 2021). This is made achievable through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology in the application, which powers the educational experience. Because ELSA Speak is AI-driven, users may practice speaking English without worrying about how others would perceive them. The AI engine behind ELSA Speak removes the judgment component, unlike practicing with a live conversation partner or in a classroom environment where people could feel self-conscious or worried about making mistakes in front of others. As a result, a non-judgmental environment is created that allows individuals to freely try out and explore their English-speaking abilities.

Users are free to make mistakes with ELSA Speak since it offers a secure environment for practicing. Making mistakes is a crucial component of learning since it enables users to spot areas for development and absorb those lessons. Users can take chances, attempt new pronunciation strategies, and experiment with various intonation patterns without feeling the pressure of judgment or the fear of looking inexperienced. Users eventually gain confidence in their ability to speak English since they are given the flexibility to make mistakes and learn from them.

Personalized Digital Feedback

By providing users with personalized feedback and guidance, ELSA Speak goes above and beyond simply supplying feedback on pronunciation. The application takes into account the fact that each user may experience different speech issues and adjusts its recommendations accordingly. Users that interact with ELSA Speak get personalized feedback on their areas of difficulty. The application examines their habits of pronouncing words and identifies specific areas that might require improvement, such as vocal tone, tongue location, or mouth shape. Based on these findings, ELSA Speak offers customized advice on how users might modify their pronunciation to improve accuracy.

For instance, ELSA Speak may offer advice on the proper mouth shape or tongue position to generate a certain vowel sound if a user repeatedly has trouble making it. Similarly, to this, if a user tends to talk with a wrong vocal pitch, the app may make suggestions to improve their intonation so that it sounds more natural and fluid. ELSA Speak enables users to concentrate on their unique areas of difficulty and make targeted improvements by offering guidance and personalized feedback. Users can treat their particular pronunciation issues using this personalized technique, which promotes better advancement and fluency in speaking English.

Flexibility

ELSA Speak stands out for its flexibility and adaptability because it provides users with a variety of personalized options to meet their specific demands. Users can learn at their own pace and distribute their time and effort following their preferences because of the application's flexibility in accommodating various learning schedules and speeds. The freedom it gives users in terms of learning intensity is one of the application's primary flexibilities. Users can decide how much or how little effort they want to put into practice. The program adjusts to their availability and lets them advance at a pace that works best for them, whether they have little free time or want to spend a lot of time practicing.

Additionally, bite-sized courses and practice exercises are provided on ELSA Speak. It is simpler for users to fit learning into their hectic schedules because these simplified and focused learning resources may be finished quickly. In short, reasonable learning modules make it possible for users to continually interact with the application even when they have a limited amount of time.

The user interface and experience of ELSA Speak are also flexible. Users may easily use the application in part due to the application's simple and user-friendly design (Kholis, 2021). An effortless learning experience is made possible by the user-friendly interface and simple design, which remove every unnecessary detail and allow users to practice pronunciation without any distractions.

Users finally have more control and convenience in their academic endeavours because of the program's versatility. It offers bite-sized courses, accommodates a range of learning rates, and has a straightforward design. By enabling users to customize their learning experience to meet their unique requirements and goals, these features increase the overall efficiency and enjoyment of using ELSA Speak.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the characteristics and benefits of the ELSA Speak application that helps non-native English speakers improve their pronunciation. The program addresses frequent pronunciation problems, provides interactive activities, and provides personalized feedback. The adaptability of ELSA Speak has been highlighted, enabling users to learn at their own pace and adjust their educational experience. Gamification motivates and engages users, especially younger ones.

ELSA Speak provides a safe, non-judgmental learning environment where users can practice their English-speaking skills and learn from their mistakes. Automatic speech recognition technology gives users rapid feedback on pronunciation and allows them to make corrections. ELSA Speak's personalized feedback and guidance help improve pronunciation.

This study shows that ELSA Speak can help non-native English speakers improve their pronunciation. This analysis acknowledges its limitations and makes recommendations for future research on technology-based language learning solutions and language competency. ELSA Speak's long-term impacts and comparability with other pronunciation tools should be studied. ELSA Speak's effects on distinct learner populations, such as age groups or language backgrounds, may also help determine its efficacy.

This analysis clarifies ELSA Speak and its potential benefits for language learners. It helps educators, language experts, and English speakers improve their pronunciation. Technology-driven solutions like ELSA Speak are crucial for language acquisition. Such applications can improve pronunciation education for educators and students.

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