

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING "LEARN & SPEAK ENGLISH PRAKTIKA" IN IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze students' perceptions towards the use of the Learn & Speak English Praktika application in improving English speaking skills. The main focus of this study is how this application helps students improve their pronunciation, motivation, confidence, and vocabulary. This study uses a qualitative method with data collection through questionnaires and interviews with grade XI students in Medan. The results showed that the majority of students gave a positive response to this application. They felt that the real-time feedback feature helped improve pronunciation, AI-based interactions increased confidence, and the variety of conversation topics encouraged motivation and enriched their vocabulary. The implications of this study indicate that AI-based technology can be an effective alternative in language learning, especially in improving speaking skills. This application can be utilized by educators as an additional learning media that increases student engagement and independence in learning English. However, this study has several limitations, such as the limited duration of the study and the sample coverage which only included one school. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of this application and compare it with conventional learning methods in a broader context.

Keywords: AI-based learning, Learn & Speak English Praktika, Speaking skill, Students' perception

A. INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills play a crucial role in English language learning, as they are essential for effective communication in both academic and professional settings. The ability to speak fluently in English enables students to participate in discussions, present ideas clearly, and engage in meaningful conversations in diverse environments. As English continues to be the global lingua franca, mastering speaking skills has become a necessity for students aiming for academic success and career advancement. Numerous studies have highlighted the significance of speaking skills in language acquisition. Richards (2008) emphasizes that speaking is a fundamental aspect of language proficiency, as it reflects one's ability to use language effectively in real-life situations. Additionally, Boffi Canepa (2013) states that

developing speaking competence requires continuous practice and meaningful interaction, which are often lacking in traditional classroom settings. With the rapid advancement of technology, language learning has evolved significantly. Various digital tools, including AI-powered applications, have been introduced to enhance English-speaking skills. These technologies offer interactive and immersive learning experiences, enabling students to practice real-life conversations in a supportive environment. Recent studies highlight the potential of AI-driven platforms in improving pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in speaking English (Clark & Mayer, 2023; Abdulmunem, 2023).

Despite the importance of speaking skills, many students face challenges in developing their oral proficiency. Common obstacles include a lack of confidence, difficulties in pronunciation, and the fear of making mistakes. Affective factors such as anxiety and low self-esteem significantly impact students' willingness to speak in English (Krashen, 1982). Additionally, limited exposure to native speakers and inadequate speaking practice in traditional classroom settings hinder students from developing (Ding et al., 2025). Curriculum limitations often place more emphasis on reading and writing rather than speaking, further restricting students' opportunities for oral communication. The lack of real-time feedback and meaningful interaction in traditional learning methods makes it difficult for students to identify and correct their speaking errors (Zamiri & Esmaili, 2024). As a result, there is a growing need for alternative learning tools that provide personalized feedback and facilitate engaging speaking practice.

The integration of technology in language learning has provided new opportunities to enhance speaking skills. AI-based applications, mobile learning platforms, and interactive digital tools have been widely used to support language acquisition. Studies have shown that AI-driven applications such as Duolingo, ELSA Speak, and FluentU can significantly improve learners' pronunciation and fluency by providing real-time feedback and interactive exercises (Loewen et al., 2019). Furthermore, AI-driven language learning tools offer personalized feedback tailored to each learner's strengths and weaknesses. AI-powered speaking applications enhance learning by dynamically adjusting content and exercises based on users' speaking patterns and proficiency levels. AI-powered virtual tutors can mimic real-life conversations, enabling learners to practice in a low-pressure, immersive environment (Godwin-Jones, 2021). The combination of AI, speech recognition technology, and real-time feedback fosters an effective learning experience that encourages learners to actively engage in speaking practice without the fear of judgment or embarrassment. The use of AI in speaking practice has the potential to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, making language learning more effective and accessible. As AI technology continues to evolve, its role in language education is expected to expand, offering even more advanced features to support learners in achieving fluency and confidence in speaking English.

Although various studies have explored the effectiveness of AI-based language learning applications, no studies have specifically examined the use of AI avatars like Learn & Speak English Praktika in improving students' speaking skills, particularly in classroom settings or in the context of students' perceptions of this technology. Previous research has predominantly focused on general language learning tools. For instance, Anggraini (2022) examined the effectiveness of ELSA Speak in improving pronunciation but noted that the application does not provide real-time conversational practice. Similarly, Loewen et al. (2019) analyzed Duolingo's role in language learning, finding that while it enhances

vocabulary and grammar, it lacks features for interactive speaking practice. Abimanto & Sumarsono (2024) highlighted the potential of AI speech recognition technology in improving pronunciation and confidence but emphasized the absence of contextualized real-time interactions. Additionally, Fink et al. (2024) discussed the transformative role of AI avatars in education but identified a gap in their application for structured classroom-based speaking practice. Learn & Speak English Praktika addresses this gap by introducing an AI-powered platform that provides dynamic interactions through AI avatars. These avatars simulate real human interactions, delivering instant feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary usage in an immersive, low-pressure environment. This unique feature helps learners engage in meaningful conversations without the fear of judgment, which is critical for improving oral proficiency and confidence (Shahzad et al., 2024). Despite the promising potential of AI-driven avatars in language learning, empirical data on their impact—particularly on student engagement, motivation, and speaking abilities in structured classroom settings—remains limited. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the growing body of research by evaluating how Praktika can bridge the gap between theoretical language learning and practical speaking application.

Given the lack of empirical research on AI-driven avatars for speaking practice, particularly in classroom settings, this study aims to bridge this gap by investigating students' perceptions of Learn & Speak English Praktika in enhancing their speaking skills. Specifically, it focuses on how the application impacts key aspects of speaking skill development, including motivation, confidence, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition. Understanding students' experiences with AI-based speaking practice tools is crucial for educators and researchers seeking to integrate innovative technology into English language learning effectively. The findings of this study will contribute to the growing body of research on AI-driven language learning and provide valuable insights for integrating technology into English education

B. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008) to explore students' perceptions of using the Learn & Speak English Praktika application in improving their speaking skills. This method is considered appropriate as it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences within a real-life educational setting. The research was conducted at SMA Prayatna Medan, involving 30 eleventh-grade students selected through purposive sampling. Participants were chosen based on two criteria: their ability to install and use the application and their prior challenges in learning English. To collect data, this study utilized questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire consisted of close-ended questions designed to examine students' perceptions of the application as a medium to enhance their speaking skills. It was structured using a five-point Likert scale and included 10 statements related to students' experiences with Learn & Speak English Praktika as a digital learning tool for English speaking practice. After data collection, the questionnaire responses were analyzed and presented in descriptive formats, categorizing items based on thematic relevance and calculating percentage distributions for each category. For qualitative data obtained from interviews, thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017) was employed to identify key patterns and recurring themes. This method enabled both numerical representation and an in-depth exploration of students' experiences and perspectives. By recognizing common themes across different data sources, thematic analysis provided a structured and comprehensive interpretation of students' engagement with the application.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study findings based on questionnaire and interview data, indicate that the majority of students responded favorably to using the Learn & Speak English Praktika application to enhance their English-speaking abilities. The results study can be divided into four primary categories: improving pronunciation, increasing motivation, building self-confidence, and enriching vocabulary.

1. Improving Pronunciation

One of the main benefits of this application is its role in enhancing students' pronunciation skills. Table 1 presents students' responses regarding the application's impact on their pronunciation skills.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of the Application's Impact on Pronunciation Skills

No	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
1	The "Learn & Speak English Praktika" application helps me improve my English pronunciation.	20	70	10	0	0	100
2	The features in this application make it easier for me to understand how to speak with the correct intonation.	30	60	10	0	0	100
3	This application provides clear feedback and helps to improve my speaking skills	15	60	25	0	0	100

The findings reveal that 90% of students reported improvements in their pronunciation after using Learn & Speak English Praktika. When students are asked to practice everyday dialogue, such as asking for help, students can say sentences like: "Excuse me, could you help me find the library?" Words like "excuse" that were often mispronounced by students before become more accurate after they practice through the application. his improvement can be attributed to the application's real-time feedback on pronunciation and intonation, which allows students to identify and correct their mistakes immediately. These findings align with the study by Abimanto and Sumarsono (2024), which highlights the effectiveness of AI-powered speech recognition in enhancing pronunciation accuracy. The interview results also confirm that students found the app helpful for improving their pronunciation, as stated by the students in the following excerpts:

"Little bit improve my pronunciation." (Participant 1)

"Yes, so I can pronounce it more accurately and immediately know the meaning of the vocabulary because there is a translation below." (Participant 2)

These findings underscore the advantage of AI-driven pronunciation tools over traditional methods, which often lack immediate corrective feedback. Unlike conventional approaches, *Learn & Speak English Praktika* integrates interactive AI-driven avatars that create an immersive environment for learners to practice natural pronunciation. Similarly, Anggraini (2022) found that ELSA Speak improves pronunciation accuracy; however, it lacks the

interactive conversational features that *Praktika* offers, making the latter a more comprehensive tool for speaking practice.

2. Increasing Motivation

Motivation in learning English is very important for students' success in improving their speaking skills. The questionnaire results indicate that the Learn & Speak English *Praktika* application positively influenced students' motivation. The following table presents students' responses regarding whether the application encouraged them to practice speaking English.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of the Application's Impact on Their Motivation

No	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
4	This application is interesting, so I am more motivated to practice speaking English after using this application.	30	50	20	0	0	100
5	The time I spend using this application is effective in improving my speaking skills.	20	70	10	0	0	100

The questionnaire results indicate that 80% of students stated that the application made them more motivated in practicing speaking. The main factors that increased their motivation were the fun interactive features and the AI avatars that they could communicate with. In addition, the wide variety of topics made learning more dynamic and interesting. It is supported by the following excerpts:

"Interesting! I use the app twice a day so I get quite a lot of new vocabulary too."

(Participant 1)

"It gives me daily conversation exercises that challenge me, so I feel more motivated to use English in different situations."

(Participant 2)

The findings suggest that students' motivation to practice speaking English increased due to the engaging and interactive features of *Learn & Speak English Praktika*. By making the learning process more enjoyable and less monotonous, the application successfully captures students' interest. Another key factor in increasing students' motivation is the instant feedback provided by the application. Unlike traditional methods that often lack direct evaluation of pronunciation or sentence structure errors, this application enables students to identify and correct mistakes in real-time. This feature not only boosts their confidence but also aligns with Godwin-Jones (2021), who found that real-time feedback in AI-driven language tools enhances learner engagement and self-efficacy.

In addition, the variety of conversation topics in this application also plays a significant role in maintaining students' interest and motivation. With more than 150 conversation topics covering various real-life situations, students can choose scenarios most relevant to their needs, making the learning experience more personalized and contextual. This aligns with findings from Fink et al. (2024), which highlight the importance of contextualized and adaptive learning environments in promoting sustained learner motivation and active participation. These results indicate that the combination of real-time feedback and diverse, contextually relevant content significantly contributes to students' motivation to practice speaking English using AI-assisted tools. These results highlight that the combination of real-time feedback and diverse, contextually relevant content significantly contributes to students' motivation to practice speaking English using AI-assisted tools. As Fink et al. (2024) noted, AI-based platforms enhance motivation by offering personalized learning experiences, while Godwin-Jones (2021) emphasized the role of instant feedback in maintaining learners' confidence and enthusiasm.

3. Building Self Confidence

One of the biggest challenges in speaking English is a lack of confidence, which can make students hesitant to participate in conversations. The Learn & Speak English Praktika application offers a supportive space to help them gain confidence. The questionnaire results show how this application boosts students' self-confidence in speaking English:

Table 3. Students' Perceptions of the Application's Impact on Their Self-Confidence in Speaking English

No	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
6	Using this application increases my confidence in speaking English.	20	50	30	0	0	100
7	I feel that this application helps me overcome the difficulties in speaking English that I faced before	40	50	10	0	0	100

The questionnaire results indicate that 70% of students feel more confident after using this application. They can practice without fear of being judged, which makes them more comfortable speaking English. The conversation simulation feature further prepares them for real speaking situations. As a result, when asked to perform dialogue conversations in front of the class, students demonstrate greater confidence due to consistent practice with the application. The low-pressure, judgment-free environment provided by AI avatars reduces anxiety and builds self-assurance, supporting Nizar's (2024) findings that AI-driven platforms help learners overcome language anxiety. Similarly, Aini et al. (2022) observed that *Hello English* improved learners' speaking confidence but lacked the interactivity and real-time conversational features present in *Praktika*. These results confirm that interactive AI tools can effectively foster self-confidence in language learners. It is also supported by the following excerpt:

"This application can help me to be confident in English, and this application is good to use when we have difficulty speaking English."
(Participant 1)

"I feel be confidence." (Participant 2)

These statements highlight how the interactive features of the application contribute to students' comfort and confidence in speaking English. This finding aligns with Krashen's (1982) Second Language Acquisition theory, which emphasizes that reducing anxiety and shyness can significantly enhance the effectiveness of language learning. Similarly, Abimanto and Sumarsono (2024) found that real-time feedback in AI-powered applications boosts self-confidence by providing immediate corrections and personalized guidance. Moreover, Godwin-Jones (2021) emphasized that adaptive AI technologies dynamically adjust to learners' proficiency levels, fostering a supportive environment that encourages frequent practice. When students feel more confident, they are more likely to engage in consistent speaking practice, ultimately improving their fluency in English.

4. Enrich Vocabulary

In addition to improving pronunciation, motivation, and confidence, the app also helps students expand their vocabulary. The questionnaire results regarding vocabulary enrichment are presented in Table 4 below:

Table 4. Students' Perceptions of Vocabulary Enrichment through the Application

No	Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Total (%)
8	The speaking exercises in this application help me expand my English vocabulary.	45	50	5	0	0	100
9	The materials provided in the application are relevant to my needs to learn to speak English.	10	70	20	0	0	100
10	I feel that the vocabulary learned through the app is easy for me remember and use.	50	50	0	0	0	100

The questionnaire results indicate that 95% of students reported an increase in their vocabulary after using the app, demonstrating its effectiveness in helping students acquire and apply new words in conversation. This is evident when students create dialogues about shopping at the market. For example, one student says, "Excuse me, how much does this jacket cost? Do you have it in a different size?" The use of words like "cost" and "size," which were previously unfamiliar to students, suggests that they have successfully learned and applied new vocabulary through the app. With a variety of conversation topics available, students can acquire vocabulary in meaningful, real-life contexts.

Additionally, the translation and word suggestion feature further enhance their understanding and usage of new words. By providing contextualized learning opportunities, the app enables students to grasp both the meaning and correct usage of vocabulary. This aligns with Sporn et al. (2020), who found that contextualized learning tools like *Babbel*

improve vocabulary acquisition, though *Babbel* lacks the real-time interactive speaking features available in this app. These findings are supported by the following excerpts:

"Before I only knew basic words, but now I can use more complex words like 'negotiation' and 'collaboration' in conversations." (Participant 1)

"The app frequently introduces me to new words, including business and technology terms, that I had hardly ever heard of before." (Participant 2)

The findings above suggest that students' ability to incorporate newly learned words into various contexts, such as casual discussions with friends or class debates, reflects a meaningful expansion of their vocabulary. Additionally, some students reported that having a broader vocabulary increased their confidence in writing essays and expressing ideas in academic settings. This suggests that vocabulary acquisition is not only beneficial for oral communication but also plays a crucial role in developing overall language proficiency. These findings align with Fink et al. (2024), who emphasize that effective vocabulary learning occurs when learners engage with new words in meaningful, contextualized interactions. Unlike passive memorization, which often leads to short-term retention, integrating vocabulary practice with real-life scenarios—such as those provided by *Learn & Speak English Praktika*—enhances long-term retention and practical application. This supports the idea that AI-driven language tools, by simulating authentic conversations, can create immersive learning environments that promote both vocabulary acquisition and communicative competence.

D. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine students' perceptions of using the Learn & Speak English Praktika app to practice speaking English. The findings from both the questionnaire and interviews indicate that this application positively impacts students' speaking skills by improving pronunciation, motivation, confidence, and vocabulary acquisition. The AI avatar feature provides a realistic, interactive, and engaging language learning experience, helping students overcome speaking-related challenges. From a practical perspective, this application serves as an effective tool for independent learning. Students can practice speaking English in a low-pressure environment, enhancing their fluency without fear of judgment. Additionally, teachers can incorporate this app into classroom activities to provide supplemental speaking practice, allowing students to refine their pronunciation and engage in contextual conversations beyond traditional learning settings. Despite its benefits, this study has several limitations. It was conducted in a single school with a limited sample size, making the results less generalizable. Additionally, the short study duration did not allow for an assessment of long-term language proficiency development. Future research should expand the sample size, involve diverse educational settings, and examine the long-term effects of AI-driven language learning applications. Further studies could also explore teachers' perspectives on integrating such tools into formal instruction and compare various AI-based applications to determine their effectiveness across different language learning aspects.

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