



## **Using ELSA Speak Application as A Medium to Improve English Speaking Skills**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to assess how the ELSA Speak app helps improve the English-speaking skills of eighth-grade students at an Indonesian Islamic Junior High School and measure how much their speaking skills improve after using the app. The participants in this research included one English teacher and 15 eighth-grade students. The research was conducted using a Classroom Action Research (CAR) methodology, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data were gathered through photographs and observation checklists, while quantitative data were derived by comparing students' pre-test and post-test results. In the first cycle of the study, the average pre-test score was 53.93, which increased to 62.47 in the post-test. In the second cycle, students' performance improved further, with the pre-test score rising to 61.67 and the post-test reaching 74.87. The statistical analysis revealed a significant improvement in students' speaking abilities, as indicated by the t-test results. The t-test value for the second cycle (7.665) was notably higher than that of the first cycle (5.502), demonstrating a significant impact on students' speaking skills. The overall improvement from the first to the second cycle was 46.66%. Based on these findings, the study concludes that the use of the ELSA Speak application has a substantial positive effect on the students' English-speaking proficiency.

**Keywords:** ELSA Speak application, English, high school students, speaking

### **INTRODUCTION**

In today's era, English speaking skills are very important to master because almost everyone in the world uses English as an effective international communication tool (Kurniawan, Sabaruddin, & Gusweni, 2018). To be able to carry out human communication activities, it is necessary to master basic communication skills, namely listening skills, speaking skills, reading skills, and writing skills. In this study, researchers focus on discussing one of the skills in communication, namely speaking skill. According to Rao (2019), of the four basic skills in English, speaking is the one that seems difficult because the speaker must

produce sentences spontaneously. The difficulties faced are usually due to several reasons, such as the lack of students' understanding of vocabulary, grammar, and lack of knowledge of English pronunciation correctly (Hastomo et al., 2024). In addition, according to Hosni (2014), there are internal factors of students that affect their ability to speak English, for example, such as lack of motivation and lack of self-confidence of students. So, this of course will limit students to express their ability to speak English.

These difficulties are also experienced by most students in Indonesia. This difficulty is also experienced by students of SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah. The most common thing is the lack of knowledge of correct English pronunciation so students are afraid when they want to speak English. Following the TPACK framework (Ginting et al., 2022), one of the teachers there applied an application namely the ELSA Speak application in solving those problems. By using the ELSA Speak application, students can learn how to pronounce consonant sounds correctly (Samad & Ismail, 2020). Besides that, Aratusa (2018) said, this application can be used by teachers to create a better speaking learning environment because students can do the exercises repeatedly. Some previous research such as Samad & Aminullah (2019), Kholis (2021), Rosyid & Hidayati (2021), and Thanh, et al. (2021), the researchers also interested in improving students' speaking skills using the ELSA Speak application.

The use of technology in teaching is one way that is considered effective in improving student learning outcomes in Indonesia, especially in learning to speak English (Sari et al., 2023). Therefore, the authors are interested in studying more deeply the use of the ELSA speak application as a medium to improve students' English speaking skills at Ar-Rahmah Suruh Islamic Junior High School. In this study, researchers discuss the main questions, namely:

1. How is the ELSA Speak application used to improve students' 8th grade speaking skills at SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah?
2. How far is the improvement of 8th-grade students' speaking skills at SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah after being taught using the ELSA Speak application?

In this case study, the researcher found several similar studies which had been done before. The first research was conducted by Samad & Ismail (2020) entitled "ELSA Speak Application as a Supporting Media in Enhancing Students' Pronunciation Skill" which reported that there was an increase in the speaking skills of the first-semester students' from STKIP Muhammadiyah Enrekang English Study Program after the application of the ELSA Speak application. The second research was conducted by Kholis (2021) entitled "ELSA Speak App: Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) for Supplementing English Pronunciation Skills" which revealed that the ELSA Speak application does not only improve English language skills but also makes students of English education of Nahdlatul Ulama University Yogyakarta motivated to learn pronunciation well and

effectively through the application. Another research conducted by Rosyid & Hidayati (2021), entitled “Teaching Pronunciation Through MALL: Promoting EFL Learners’ Pronunciation and Their Learning Autonomy” explained that the ELSA Speak application can also be used to help students learn to speak English independently because its features are very easy to understand and proven effective.

From the analysis of the above prior studies, several distinctions emerge in comparison to the current study. In this study, the researcher specifically narrowed the scope of speaking learning material, concentrating on targeted content relevant to the students' curriculum, which is an area that current teaching must take into account (Hasbi, 2017). In contrast, previous research primarily focused on pronunciation learning without delving into broader speaking skills. Another key difference lies in the study's subject demographic: while this research focuses on junior high school students, earlier studies were conducted with university-level participants. These differences highlight the unique approach and context of the current investigation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Speaking*

According to Leong & Ahmadi (2017), The most important skill in English is speaking skill because usually most of the communication is delivered by using speech. Speaking is the ability that a person has to express an idea, idea or other thing by using spoken language (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014). Then to be able to learn speaking skills can be done by making preparations, presentations, exercises, evaluations, and the usual extension (Florez, 1999). However, even though a student has fulfilled the requirements to be a good speaker, a student cannot label himself as a good speaker (Hastomo et al., 2024). This labeling requires a special assessment. The assessment is usually done by other people, especially the teacher. According to Venera (2017) There are eight criteria in the assessment of speaking English, including: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, sociolinguistic skill, conversational skill, non verbal (eye-contact & body language), and content (relevance of ideas and arguments).

### *Elsa Speak application*

Elsa Speak is an English teaching application that is famous for being effective because it already uses AI technology (Hung, Phung, Hien, & Thanh, 2021). The Elsa Speak application is one of the media applications can be downloaded for free from the AppStore or Google Play that can support the 4.0 era of education (Samad & Ismail, 2020). Elsa Speak was created with features that can help students to develop their English speaking skills. The features on Elsa Speak application can be used to practice consonant sounds, vowels, word or sentence stress, and how to have a good intonation when speaking, Samad &

Aminullah (2019). Besides that the Elsa Speak application also allows for two-way learning to take place, for example, users can say certain words or sentences in English (Istiara et al., 2023), then the system from the Elsa Speak application will analyze the pronunciation results by providing scores and corrections (Fitria, 2021).

## **METHOD**

### *Participants*

The subjects of this research were 8th-grade students from SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah Suruh, involving 10 to 15 students and their English teacher. The focus of the study was the use of the ELSA Speak application as a tool to enhance the students' speaking skills.

### *Design*

This study employs Classroom Action Research (CAR), blending qualitative and quantitative methods, to evaluate the use of the ELSA Speak app in improving English speaking skills. The research follows four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In the planning phase, researchers and teachers identify issues and develop action plans involving ELSA Speak. The acting phase includes pre-tests, lessons using the app, and post-tests. During observation, researchers track student progress and engagement with the app. Finally, in the reflection phase, students and teachers assess the app's effectiveness and any challenges faced. This process is conducted over two cycles to obtain comprehensive results.

### *Data Collection*

In this study, two data collection techniques were employed: qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative data involved classroom observations, where the researcher monitored and recorded the learning process, focusing on strategies and methods used in two to four sessions for optimal results. The quantitative data included pre-test and post-test results, which assessed students' English-speaking abilities before and after the use of the ELSA Speak application. Additionally, documentation in the form of photographs was used to capture moments during the teaching and learning process, serving as supplementary evidence. Therefore, in this study, the research instruments included an observation checklist and tests.

### *Data Analysis*

In this classroom action research, both process and result data were collected. Process data captured the activities during the study, while result data reflected the outcomes. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and statistical techniques. The descriptive analysis focused on understanding how the ELSA Speak app was used to enhance students' English speaking skills based on observation checklists. The statistical analysis applied formulas such as mean calculation, deviation standard, and t-test to measure the average scores, variability, and the significance of improvements between pre-test and post-test

results, providing a quantitative evaluation of the app's effectiveness.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

#### 1. The use of ELSA Speak application to improve 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' English speaking skills at SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah Suruh

**Table 1. Result of Student Observation Checklist of Cycle I**

No.	Name	Paying attention	Being active in class	Completing the task	Geeting excited when using ELSA Speak application
1.	ASWS	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	ASF	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	ASA	✓	-	✓	✓
4.	BIE	✓	-	✓	✓
5.	EWP	✓	-	✓	✓
6.	FCH	✓	-	✓	✓
7.	HBA	✓	-	✓	✓
8.	ITL	✓	-	✓	✓
9.	KAR	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	NK	✓	-	✓	✓
11.	NH	✓	-	✓	✓
12.	MDA	✓	✓	✓	✓
13.	MKB	✓	-	✓	✓
14.	RBS	✓	-	✓	✓
15.	YM	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Table 2. Result of Teacher Observation Checklist of Cycle I**

No.	The Teacher Activity	Yes	No
1.	The teacher prepared learning material well	✓	
2.	The teacher asked the students' condition before lesson begin	✓	
3.	The teacher checked students' attendance	✓	
4.	The teacher gave motivation to students	✓	
5.	The teacher reminded students about previous material	✓	
6.	The teacher gave apperception	✓	
7.	The teacher explained to the students about the material	✓	
8.	The teacher used Elsa Speak app to teach English speaking	✓	
9.	The teacher gave students the opportunity to ask questions	✓	
10.	The teacher gave feedback after the lesson	✓	

**Table 3. Student Observation Checklist of Cycle II**

No.	Name	Paying attention	Active in class	Completed the task	Excited when using Elsa Speak application
1.	ASWS	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	ASF	✓	-	✓	✓
3.	ASA	✓	-	✓	✓
4.	BIE	✓	-	✓	✓
5.	EWP	✓	-	✓	✓
6.	FCH	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.	HBA	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.	ITL	✓	-	✓	✓
9.	KAR	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	NK	✓	-	✓	✓
11.	NH	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	MDA	✓	-	✓	✓
13.	MKB	✓	-	✓	✓
14.	RBS	✓	-	✓	✓
15.	YM	✓	✓	✓	✓

**Table 4. Teacher Observation Checklist of Cycle II**

No.	The Teacher Activity	Yes	No
1.	The teacher prepared learning material well	✓	
2.	The teacher asked the students' condition before lesson begin	✓	
3.	The teacher checked students' attendance	✓	
4.	The teacher gave motivation to students	✓	
5.	The teacher reminded students about previous material	✓	
6.	The teacher gave apperception	✓	
7.	The teacher explained to the students about the material	✓	
8.	The teacher used Elsa Speak app to teach English speaking	✓	
9.	The teacher gave students the opportunity to ask questions	✓	
10.	The teacher gave feedback after the lesson	✓	

These findings were obtained from the observation checklist in each cycle. After analyzing the findings in Cycle I and Cycle II, the researcher can conclude that the use of the ELSA Speak application in improving the English speaking of 8th grade students at Ar-Rahmah Suruh Islamic Junior High School is used with the initial step of the teacher introducing the features in the Elsa Speak application. In this class, the main feature used is the dictionary feature provided by ELSA Speak. In this feature, teacher and students can check the

score of the word or sentence they want to say. Students are very happy with this feature because with this feature, students can know how to pronounce and intonation words or sentences correctly. So, students can speak English well.

## **2. The improvement of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' speaking skill at SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah in the after being taught using ELSA Speak application.**

**Table 5. T-Test Score of Cycle I and Cycle II**

Analysis	Cycle I	Cycle II
Mean of Pre-test	53.93	62.42
Mean of Post-test	61.67	74.87
Total students who passed the passing grade ( $\geq 72$ )		
a. Pre-test	6.66%	20%
b. Post-test	20%	80%
c. Improvement	13.34%	60%
T-table N=15	1.761	1.761
T-test	5.502	7.665

From the data in the table above, it was concluded that there was a significant increase in students' speaking English using the ELSA Speak application. This can be seen from the results of the t-test in the first cycle which is 5.502 and the second cycle is 7.665. In the first cycle the post-test mean was greater than the pre-test, namely 61.67 in the post-test I and 53.93 in the pre-test I. Then, in the second cycle, the post-test mean was also greater than the pre-test, which was 74.87 on post-test II and 62.47 on pre-test II. In addition, the improvement can also be seen from the improvement in students who passed the passing grade (KKM), namely in the first cycle there was a 13.34% improvement and in the second cycle there was a 60% improvement. So, it can be seen that the Elsa Speak application has succeeded in improving students' speaking skills. In addition, the value of the t-test in cycle II is greater than the t-test in cycle I, which means that there is a significant effect from cycle I to cycle II.

### **Discussion**

The observation checklists indicate a positive trend in student engagement and performance when using the ELSA Speak application across both Cycle I and Cycle II. While most students demonstrated attentiveness and task completion, with excitement for the app remaining high, active participation showed only slight improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II. Teacher observations reflected consistent effective teaching strategies, with the instructor effectively preparing materials, motivating students, and providing feedback. This underscores the

ELSA Speak application's effectiveness in enhancing English speaking skills (Ghufron, 2024), as evidenced by high levels of enthusiasm and successful task completion among students. That positive student attitude seen throughout the observation can also be a defining factor, since attitude can predict ones' success of learning (Hasbi, 2013).

The findings revealed that using the ELSA Speak application helped improve the English speaking skills of 8th-grade students at SMP Islam Ar-Rahmah Suruh. The teacher first introduced the app's features, with the dictionary feature being particularly popular. This feature allowed both teachers and students to check pronunciation and intonation, enhancing the students' speaking abilities. Students enjoyed this aspect of the app as it helped them improve their accuracy in speaking English, aligning with findings by Samad & Aminullah (2019), who noted the app's effectiveness in supporting pronunciation, intonation, and phonetic learning.

Additionally, the feedback feature of ELSA Speak was favored by both teachers and students. It provided corrections and allowed the teacher to re-explain mistakes, which motivated students to improve. This feedback system aligns with previous research, such as Kholis (2021), which highlighted ELSA Speak's ability to offer instant feedback, making it easy for students to quickly learn and improve their English pronunciation. Such feedback, especially when delivered directly and properly, could stimulate for students' quick speaking skill development (Utami et al., 2020). Hence, it is recommended that this feedbacking scenario be covered within the general classroom management (Sari, 2024).

After analyzing the scores from Cycles I and II, the researcher concluded that there was a significant improvement in students' English speaking skills using the ELSA Speak application. This is evident from the t-test results, which increased from 5.502 in the first cycle to 7.665 in the second. In Cycle I, the post-test average (61.67) was higher than the pre-test average (53.93), and in Cycle II, the post-test average (74.87) surpassed the pre-test average (62.47). Additionally, the percentage of students meeting the passing grade increased from 13.34% in the first cycle to 60% in the second. This demonstrates that ELSA Speak successfully enhanced students' speaking abilities, with a significant effect observed from Cycle I to Cycle II.

These findings align with previous studies, such as Samad & Ismail (2020), who found ELSA Speak effective in improving pronunciation. Similarly, Aratusa (2018) showed that accent reduction software, including ELSA Speak, helps teachers provide better instruction to enhance pronunciation skills. Darsih, Widahi, & Hanggara (2020) also confirmed that most students believe ELSA Speak is an effective tool for improving speaking skills, especially in pronunciation. ELSA SPEAK is an example of effective online tools, which gives another testimony that it is strongly possible to enhance students' speaking skills online since they are



enabled by the many available forms of e-learning advancements we can select based on our students' needs (Hasbi, 2020).

## **CONCLUSION**

The results from the study demonstrate a significant improvement in students' English speaking skills after using the ELSA Speak app. This is evident from the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores. In pre-test I, the average score was 53.93%, increasing to 62.47% in pre-test II. After using the app, the post-test scores rose to 61.67% in post-test I and 74.87% in post-test II. These results confirm that the ELSA Speak application effectively enhances students' English speaking skills. Practically, students used the ELSA Speak application by taking advantage of its dictionary feature, which allows them to record their voices using built-in tools. The app then provides corrections and feedback, helping students refine their pronunciation. Additionally, the feature offers audio examples that correctly pronounce words or sentences, guiding students toward accurate speech.

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