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Empowering ELSA SPEAK: A Modern Approach to English Speaking and Pronunciation Mastery with an AI-Powered for EFL Students

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Abstract

This study critically examines the impacts of ELSA Speak, an AI-powered language learning application, on the development of speaking and pronunciation skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. EFL students frequently face barriers such as limited exposure to authentic English, speaking anxiety, and persistent pronunciation difficulties, all of which can hinder oral proficiency, motivation, and confidence. Through advanced speech recognition, personalized feedback, and gamified learning features, ELSA Speak is designed to address these challenges by enabling flexible, targeted practice outside the conventional classroom setting. Using a qualitative literature review approach, this study systematically analyzes empirical findings from peer-reviewed sources published between 2015 and 2024. The review synthesizes evidence that ELSA Speak users consistently experience significant improvements in pronunciation, both segmental (sounds) and suprasegmental (intonation, rhythm, stress), with several studies reporting average gains of 15–27% in post-test scores compared to traditional instruction. Additionally, learners demonstrate increased motivation, autonomous learning habits, and greater confidence to communicate, as reflected in both quantitative outcomes and learner testimonials. The application's immediate, adaptive feedback and engaging activities facilitate more accurate speech, reduce speaking anxiety, and foster sustained engagement—addressing many long-standing limitations of traditional EFL pedagogy. Despite these positive results, challenges such as the need for digital literacy and technology access remain. The current body of research also highlights the necessity for further investigation into ELSA Speak's long-term effectiveness and its integration with

broader pedagogical frameworks. Overall, this review provides a comprehensive synthesis of ELSA Speak's practical benefits and limitations, offering valuable insights for educators and future researchers on the transformative potential of AI-driven tools in supporting effective, learner-centered English instruction.

Keywords: *EFL learners, speaking skills, pronunciation, ELSA Speak, AI-powered learning*

Pendahuluan

In recent years, digital technology has played a pivotal role in enhancing language teaching and learning beyond the classroom setting. Mastering speaking and pronunciation is essential for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, as these skills underpin effective communication and overall language proficiency (Khoi & Chi, 2024). Nonetheless, many EFL learners continue to experience challenges such as limited access to real English-speaking contexts, anxiety when speaking, and persistent pronunciation errors—each of which can undermine oral performance, confidence, and motivation to practice (Marlinda & Huda, 2024). English pronunciation is widely acknowledged as one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, especially for non-native speakers. The complexity of English phonetics—ranging from diverse vowel and consonant sounds to intonation, rhythm, and stress—often leads to communication difficulties and reduced learner confidence. One of the biggest issues stems from the fact that English pronunciation is hard because there are various sounds, diphthongs, and intonation patterns that non-native speakers might be unfamiliar with (Dwi Aryanti & Santosa, 2024). These challenges are further compounded by individual differences such as accent, first language interference, cultural background, and psychological factors like motivation and anxiety. In response to these challenges, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based language learning tools have emerged as innovative solutions that provide personalized, adaptive learning experiences. Balancing the benefits

AI presents with the need to solve its drawbacks will be vital as it develops to support a future of peaceful coexistence between people and robots (Purnama et al., 2024).

One of the most transformative innovations in this domain is Artificial intelligence (AI) is a technological breakthrough that enables pupils to learn anything rapidly, enjoyably, and allows students to practice and apply wherever they are and at any time (Irsan, Noni, & Baa, 2023). AI is a key element of the learning process because it delivers individualized feedback, interactive activities, and immersive experiences tailored to the requirements of each learner (Dwi Aryanti & Santosa, 2024). Students of this generation must be technologically competent in addition to meeting the increased worldwide requirement of English proficiency. Technology has grown so important that firms in this century will be unable to thrive unless they are technologically adept (Khalizah & Damanik, 2024).

ELSA Speak is a leading AI-powered application designed to enhance English speaking and pronunciation skills for EFL learners by providing real-time, personalized feedback and targeted exercises (Sholekhah & Fakhrurriana, 2023). Many students struggle with speaking proficiency due to a lack of confidence, difficulty articulating ideas, and disengagement with traditional learning methods (Putri, Abdul, & Septiana, 2024). ELSA Speak addresses these challenges through advanced speech recognition technology, enabling learners to practice independently and receive immediate, adaptive feedback on specific pronunciation features such as consonants, vowels, stress, and intonation (Becker & Edalatishams, 2019).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that ELSA Speak significantly enhances learners' pronunciation and speaking performance, while increasing motivation and confidence through its interactive, autonomous features (Maghdalena & Wahyuningsih, 2024). Its intuitive interface, diverse practice modules, and built-in assessment tools make the app accessible and

beneficial for students who often struggle with or find traditional instruction less effective (Dwi Aryanti & Santosa, 2024). Nevertheless, challenges such as dependence on mobile devices and the need for sufficient digital literacy persist, which may limit its broader applicability (Permatasari & Lubis, 2024).

However, despite these promising findings and the increasing adoption of AI-powered tools like ELSA Speak, there is still a lack of comprehensive synthesis and critical analysis regarding its long-term effectiveness, practical impacts, and pedagogical implications across diverse educational settings. Most existing research tends to focus on short-term improvements or specific user experiences, leaving broader questions about sustainable benefits and challenges insufficiently addressed. To fill this research gap, this article systematically reviews recent empirical studies on ELSA Speak, evaluating both its strengths and limitations, and explores how such technology can best be integrated to empower EFL students in mastering English speaking and pronunciation in modern educational contexts.

Literature Review

ELSA Speak is an AI-powered mobile application designed to support EFL learners in improving their English speaking and pronunciation skills. Founded in 2015 by Xavier Anguera, the app leverages advanced speech recognition and personalized feedback to help users identify and correct specific pronunciation errors (Tran Dang Khoi, 2024). With over 40 million downloads, ELSA Speak offers accessible and adaptive learning opportunities, allowing learners to practice flexibly on their own devices (Hasbi & Nursaputri, 2024).

Numerous studies highlight ELSA Speak's effectiveness in facilitating significant gains in both segmental (individual sounds) and suprasegmental

(intonation, stress, rhythm) aspects of English pronunciation. The adaptive learning system, real-time feedback, and progress tracking have been shown to motivate users and build autonomous learning habits, resulting in measurable improvements in pronunciation accuracy, oral fluency, and self-confidence (Dwi Aryanti & Santosa, 2024). Learners often report reduced speaking anxiety and a greater willingness to practice English, as the app provides a safe environment free from peer judgment (Khalizah & Damanik, 2024).

Empirical research further demonstrates that ELSA Speak users experience average improvements of 15–27% in pronunciation test scores, with statistically significant enhancements in fluency and overall speaking competence after consistent use (Sholekhah & Fakhurriana, 2023). User testimonials reinforce these quantitative findings, describing increased motivation, confidence, and persistence in developing English speaking skills (Maghdalena & Wahyuningsih, 2024).

Despite its advantages, there remain challenges such as the need for digital literacy and device access, which can limit the app's reach for some learners (Permatasari, 2024). Furthermore, while existing studies mainly focus on short-term results or user perceptions, there is a lack of comprehensive, long-term analysis on ELSA Speak's overall pedagogical impact across diverse contexts—highlighting the importance of continued critical review and synthesis (Dwi Aryanti & Santosa, 2024).

In summary, evidence suggests that ELSA Speak is a valuable and innovative tool for improving English speaking proficiency among EFL learners. Its ability to deliver engaging, contextualized practice and effective feedback positions it as a strong complement to traditional language instruction.

Method

By using a literature review approach, this qualitative study investigated how ELSA Speak assists EFL learners in improving their pronunciation and speaking abilities. In particular, concepts, experiences, and practices can be examined more thoroughly through qualitative research (K. & S., 2018). The examination of literature enables researchers to comprehend the research carried out, identify any deficiencies, and establish a conceptual framework (Hart, 1998). Additionally: In order to ensure relevance and quality, sources were selectively selected from peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and reports published between 2015 and 2024 (Palinkas et al., 1968). The review was conducted using search keywords such as "ELSA Speak," "AI for language learning," and "pronunciation practice," as well as the themes of "mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)." Key patterns were identified through thematic analysis, including feedback from pronunciations, learner motivation, and contextual learning."

Search Strategy and Databases

To ensure a comprehensive review, literature was retrieved from two main database Google Scholar and Connected Papers. The search employed specific term including "ELSA speak," "AI for language learning," "pronunciation practice" and "mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)." The searches were restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings and intuitional reports publish between 2015 and 2024.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To maintain focus and relevance, the following criteria were applied:

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Article published from 2015 to 2024	Articles not in English
Studies focusing on EFL learners	Studies focusing solely on ESL or native speakers
Research on ELSA Speak or similar AI tools	Tools unrelated to speaking/pronunciation
Peer-reviewed journals or credible reports	Blogs, opinion pieces, unreviewed content

Result

The study compared a range of previous research and studies to explore the effectiveness and impact of ELSA Speak in helping students learning English as a foreign Language (EFL) develop speaking and pronunciation skills. From literature reviewed, a number of essential findings were determined:

Pronunciation Improvement

ELSA Speak has demonstrated significant effectiveness in enhancing English pronunciation among EFL learners. Studies have shown that students using this app exhibit noticeable progress, particularly in post-test results, when compared to those relying on traditional methods or alternative tools (Permatasari, 2024). The app’s interactive features allow users to listen, repeat, and receive immediate pronunciation feedback, contributing to more accurate speech and better articulation.

Increased Motivation and Engagement

Incorporating ELSA Speak into language learning has been shown to foster higher levels of motivation. Learners tend to become more enthusiastic, independent, and responsible, showing improved punctuality in completing tasks and a stronger desire to learn (Asri, Sabrina, & AC, 2024). The app's gamified and user-friendly interface makes learning more

enjoyable, helping to reduce the monotony often associated with English practice (Asri et al., 2024).

Beyond improving engagement, ELSA Speak also contributes to learners' confidence in speaking. With features like AI-powered conversation bots, students can practice without fear of judgment, gradually building their speaking fluency in a low-pressure environment (Maghdalena & Wahyuningsih, 2024). A dynamic learning atmosphere created through such tools encourages active participation and helps students stay focused (Asri et al., 2024).

Motivation is essential in sustaining the learning process. It drives effort, reinforces goals, and supports academic achievement (Rahmi & Neviyarni, 2022). With increased motivation, students are more likely to be engaged, consistent, and proactive in their language development (Suffa Maghdalena & Wahyuningsih, 2024).

Accessibility and Ease of Use

One of ELSA Speak's strengths is its accessibility. The app guides users through an initial assessment to determine their proficiency level, then tailors activities accordingly. Its intuitive design allows learners to navigate tasks easily, while real-time voice feedback ensures immediate correction and improvement. Additional tools such as an interactive wordbook enhance vocabulary and pronunciation support (Anggraini, 2022).

Personalized Feedback and Independent Learning

Feedback plays a central role in the learning process offered by ELSA Speak. Learners receive instant, personalized insights on their pronunciation, helping them become more aware of their mistakes and encouraging continuous improvement. This fosters a sense of autonomy and accountability, which is key to effective language learning (Karim, Hamzah, Anjani, & Sihole, 2023).

Moreover, the app's structured content—ranging from basic phonetics to more advanced speech elements like stress and intonation—supports both guided and independent study. Students benefit not only from improved pronunciation but also from the confidence to communicate freely in English (Sarmita Samad, 2019; Haryadi, 2020). By adapting to individual needs and levels, ELSA Speak creates a supportive learning environment where students can thrive.

Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that the integration of artificial intelligence through ELSA Speak provides a significant advancement in addressing the persistent challenges encountered by EFL learners, particularly in the domains of speaking and pronunciation. The main findings indicate that ELSA Speak, through its real-time, adaptive feedback and personalized learning pathways, effectively enhances both segmental and suprasegmental pronunciation skills, increases learner motivation, and fosters autonomous learning habits (Sholekhah & Fakhurriana, 2023). Empirical evidence and user testimonials from diverse educational contexts further corroborate the application's positive impact on learners' confidence, test scores, and communicative competence.

The implications of these findings are substantial for the field of language education. The ability of ELSA Speak to provide consistent, flexible, and culturally adaptive practice opportunities addresses long-standing limitations of traditional classroom instruction, particularly in large or resource-limited settings. Its learner-centered approach and supportive environment not only reduce speaking anxiety but also promote greater engagement and persistence in language learning (Hasbi & Nursaputri, 2024). As global demand for English proficiency continues to rise, the integration of AI-driven applications like ELSA Speak into language

curricula offers a promising pathway toward more inclusive, effective, and motivating learning experiences.

However, certain limitations remain, such as the reliance on digital literacy and access to technology. Therefore, it is recommended that future research further investigates the long-term effects of AI-powered language learning tools across different learner populations and educational contexts. Additionally, further studies should explore the potential for greater localization and cultural adaptation of content, as well as the integration of such technologies with other pedagogical approaches, to maximize their impact on language learning outcomes.

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