



Students' perception of using the RealLife English application for practicing English speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is one of the most important skills for communication, but students still face a myriad of problems. This study explores students' perceptions of using RealLife English application for practicing English speaking skills. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study design. The participants in this study were ten eleventh-grade students from one of the high schools in Medan. Data were collected through observation and interviews during seven days of application usage. Data analysis was conducted using the thematic analysis method. The results showed that the use of the RealLife English application provided a positive perspective on the development of students' speaking skills. Students reported better confidence, speaking fluency, better pronunciation, and better vocabulary acquisition. Application features such as voice and video calls, podcasts, TV series, movies, and fire streak were highly influential in creating an interactive learning experience and encouraging consistency in practice. However, some technical challenges, such as internet network interruptions, annoying advertisements, and limited access to premium features, are obstacles faced by students. The implication of this study shows that the RealLife English application can be an alternative media for practicing students' speaking skills independently and flexibly.

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ABSTRAK

Berbicara merupakan salah satu kompetensi penting untuk berkomunikasi, namun segudang masalah masih banyak dihadapi siswa. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi persepsi peserta didik dalam menggunakan aplikasi RealLife English dalam melatih kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah sepuluh peserta didik kelas sebelas dari salah satu sekolah menengah atas di Medan. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi dan wawancara selama tujuh hari penggunaan aplikasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan aplikasi RealLife English memberikan perspektif positif terhadap perkembangan kemampuan berbicara peserta didik. Peserta didik mengalami peningkatan kepercayaan diri, kelancaran berbicara, pelafalan yang lebih baik, dan penguasaan kosakata yang lebih baik. Fitur-fitur aplikasi seperti panggilan suara dan video, podcast, serial TV dan film, dan fire streak sangat berpengaruh dalam menciptakan pengalaman belajar yang interaktif dan mendorong konsistensi dalam berlatih. Namun, beberapa tantangan teknis seperti gangguan jaringan internet, iklan yang mengganggu, dan keterbatasan akses ke fitur premium menjadi kendala yang dihadapi oleh peserta didik. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa aplikasi RealLife English dapat menjadi media alternatif dalam melatih kemampuan berbicara peserta didik secara mandiri dan fleksibel.

Kata Kunci: aplikasi seluler; kemampuan berbicara; pembelajaran mandiri; persepsi peserta didik

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is an activity used with other people to communicate through words by providing information or conveying messages. The ability to speak is also one of the components of language that is inseparable in learning English and is considered special because it includes productive skills other than writing. Because English is considered a foreign language, students often find it difficult to speak English fluently and master it, especially in conversations (Suparlan, 2021). In EFL learning in Indonesia, especially speaking, students are expected to be able to communicate well in English. Active conversational practice in English is highly recommended to familiarize students, so that they are encouraged to speak. However, EFL students face a myriad of problems when speaking. Pronunciation, grammar, lack of vocabulary, comprehension and fluency are common problems faced by students when speaking, as well as lack of motivation, anxiety, fear of making mistakes in speaking with friends, shyness, lack of confidence and unsupportive environment are the causes of other problems faced by students when practicing speaking (Turada, 2021; Hz & Daulay, 2021). Meanwhile, inadequate vocabulary, teaching methods used by teachers, having to think in their first language when expressing opinions, and a limited English language environment are factors that contribute to the challenge of speaking (Ngoc, 2024). Therefore, this skill is a challenging skill for EFL learners to master (Madzlan et al., 2020).

To increase students' interest in practicing speaking in order to overcome the problems students face, students need additional learning motivation so that they can be actively involved in the learning process, especially speaking (Sugianto, 2020). This can be done by using engaging and interactive media and technology, particularly for students who have not yet achieved sufficient proficiency (Chen, 2022). Therefore, this research offers an application that can be a medium for students to practice and develop their English speaking. This application is called RealLife English.

RealLife English application is an educational application designed to help users practice English speaking skills through conversations with people from different countries. It is also equipped with features that support and provide strategies for students to practice speaking. As if to solve the problem, the process of learning a foreign language is facilitated and enhanced by the use of technology, including speaking. If used effectively, technology such as an application can be a medium that can help all learners develop their speaking skills, encourage them to participate in learning situations outside the classroom, and turn passive learners into more active ones, whether with the teacher or not (Mahmudah & Daulay, 2024).

In addition, speaking practice can become more interesting and impactful for students by utilizing various applications. Students can now communicate with native speakers and interact with other language learners around the world using the latest technology, so they do not need to travel abroad or live close to native speakers (Yaparak, 2022). The use of applications for Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can encourage students to become independent learners in practicing speaking because they can use the application to learn anywhere and anytime in their way (Yan & Singh, 2023). The characteristics of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning are independent or personalized learning, according to student needs, flexible time and place (Caraca, 2024).

Developing the effect of the RealLife English application on speaking practice, particularly in conversation, requires an understanding of how students perceive its usefulness. Perceptions play a crucial role in determining students' learning outcomes, motivation, and engagement. Therefore, researching students' views on the RealLife English application can provide valuable insights into its usefulness as an English-speaking learning medium.

A myriad of research studies have been conducted regarding the use of technology to help develop students' speaking skills or overcome the various challenges they face. For example, A number of previous studies have shown the important role of technology in supporting the development of students' English speaking skills. Using TikTok as a learning medium helped improve students' speaking skills through three stages, namely pre-recording, recording, and post-recording (Adawiyah & Dalimunthe, 2024). Nevertheless, students still face challenges in aspects of grammar, pronunciation, and mastery of application features. The application of a short conversation application was able to increase students' participation, confidence, and speaking ability gradually in each learning cycle (Mariam et al., 2022). In Saudi Arabia, the use of a Desuggestopedia approach-based English speaking practice application created a comfortable learning environment, as well as increased students' positive perceptions of the app's usefulness and effectiveness (Alkhalaf & Moafa, 2024).

Similar research was also conducted in other contexts. The importance of teacher guidance in utilizing the Hallo application to promote the improvement of students' speaking skills, especially at the basic level (Le Thi & Nguyet, 2023). Meanwhile, 98% of students have a positive perception of the Hello English application in improving speaking skills (Daulay et al., 2023). This application is considered efficient, easy to access, and able to increase students' interest in learning through interactive features. Finally, using the Cudu app increased students' motivation to practice speaking English and had a positive impact on their overall speaking skills. In general, these findings show that technology-based apps have great potential to strengthen students' speaking skills in learning English.

Previous research has highlighted and explored the effectiveness and impact of various teaching technologies in reducing problems and supporting development in speaking English. However, one area that has not been widely explored is students' perceptions of the use of applications specifically designed to practice conversational skills in English independently, such as the RealLife English application. Researchers hope that this application can help students practice English conversation both in class and independently, through active learning, anywhere and anytime, and can create a more flexible learning environment, in accordance with the needs of students. Therefore, based on the problems that have been described, this research will explore how students perceive the use of the Realife English application in helping them practice English conversation.

In order to address the formulated questions and fill the gap, this study aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of the RealLife English Application in helping them practice English speaking skills. This research plays an important role in understanding how technology, particularly the RealLife English app, can helps in practicing English speaking skills interactively and flexibly and creating a supportive environment, even when done independently.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Skills

Speaking is one of the most important language skills in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Speaking is an interactive process involving the oral production, reception, and processing of information. Proficiency in speaking allows one to convey ideas, engage in discussions, and actively participate in conversations. Speaking proficiency encompasses not only vocabulary acquisition but also fluency, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation (Normawati et al., 2023; Manorum et al., 2024). However, various studies have found several problems that students often face in improving their speaking skills. One of the main problems is limited vocabulary and grammatical structures that make students feel hesitant and often silent when speaking. Not only that, improper pronunciation is also a significant challenge (Marewangang, 2024). In addition, psychological factors such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes are also major inhibitors (foreign language anxiety) in speaking (Hijra et al., 2024). So these problems reduce students' motivation and enthusiasm to persevere in their efforts to achieve fluency in English.

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a learning approach that utilizes mobile technology such as smartphones, tablets, and mobile-based applications to support innovative English learning, including speaking (Zhen & Hashim, 2022). The advantage of MALL is its ability to provide access to materials anytime and anywhere, allowing learners to optimize their free time to practice speaking independently. In this context, MALL has eliminated the boundaries between classroom and home learning, as well as between computers and mobile devices, by providing a more personalized and comfortable learning environment for students. This can serve as a teaching strategy that supports learning both inside and outside the classroom (Putri & Degeng, 2024).

Several studies have shown that the use of mobile applications in MALL offers significant opportunities to support English-speaking learning. Both teachers and students responded positively to the English Conversation practice application, supported by a more interactive, flexible, and efficient learning experience in terms of internet quota usage (Putra et al., 2023). In addition, the use of the Tandem application in improving speaking skills through call and video call features and in the Cake app supports students' independent learning by offering features that are easily accessible, engaging, and rich in learning *content* (Lubis et al., 2024; Redjeki & Muhajir, 2022).

Another application that is also relevant to MALL is RealLife English. This application provides a platform for communicating with native speakers or other learners through calls and video calls. The application facilitates short conversations that help language learners practice speaking and familiarize themselves with real-life conversation contexts. The application offers call and video call features, enabling users to engage in real conversations with native speakers or fellow English learners. This helps them practice intonation, pronunciation, and fluency. Additionally, the application provides podcast materials, as well as TV and movie series, to help users understand natural contexts and expressions in English. The vocabulary

practice feature is a beneficial addition, as it allows users to expand their vocabulary through integrated exercises within the app. The Fire Streak feature is one aspect that encourages consistent practice, as it provides daily challenges to keep users practicing every day. With these various features, RealLife English aims to create a more comfortable, flexible, and supportive learning environment for users to practice their English speaking skills independently.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative case study design to explore students' perceptions of using the RealLife English application to practice English speaking skills. This design was selected to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences, benefits, and challenges in using the application. Qualitative case studies are a research approach designed to examine a phenomenon in its context by utilizing various data sources (Baxter & Jack, 2015). This method allows a thorough exploration of a problem, avoids a limited point of view, and instead uses multiple perspectives to understand various aspects of the phenomenon under study. In this study, the approach was used to describe how students' views and experiences of practicing English conversation using the RealLife English application. This study involved ten eleventh-grade high school students in Medan in the 2023/2024 academic year, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique. These students were chosen based on their existing competency in basic English-speaking skills, as they already have sufficient basic English from their previous education level. The small sample size enabled in-depth exploration of individual perspectives, provided a broad understanding, and collected diverse and relevant data on how RealLife helped to practice their English speaking skills.

This study was conducted for seven (7) consecutive days, both at school and independently. On the first day, the researcher introduced the RealLife English application to the participants and provided guidelines for its use. Participants were asked to try using the application to communicate with other users. During the second and third days, participants explored the supporting features in the application. These activities aimed to provide a stronger foundation for conversation in the following days. During the fourth through sixth days, participants focus on conversational practice using the application's direct communication features with fellow users as well as the application's other supporting features independently. On the seventh day, participants were asked again to try using the application to communicate with other users as they did on the first day. Then interview was about students' perceptions.

The data collection techniques were observation and semi-structured interviews. Observation was carried out by monitoring and taking notes of students' interactions on the Realife English application during their conversation sessions. Observations were made to clarify what the students said during interviews. The semi-structured interviews were recorded to explore the students' perceptions and experiences of using the Realife English application for 7 days. The semi-structured interviews followed a guided protocol with flexibility to explore emerging themes. Thus, the interviews enabled us to reveal more information from the students regarding their experience with using the application.

According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña in their book entitled "Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook", the data obtained from the interview transcripts were analyzed qualitatively using the thematic content analysis method. The data analysis process in this study was carried out through transcribed interviews and field observations. After the data was collected, the next step was to reduce the data, namely by sorting and selecting relevant information and eliminating data that did not support the research focus. This stage aims to simplify and sharpen the data so that it is easier to analyze. Furthermore, the reduced data were presented in the form of a systematic narrative description in order to provide a clear picture of the research findings. In the final stage, researchers conducted an in-depth analysis of the presented data in order to draw valid conclusions in accordance with the research objectives. To improve the accuracy of the results, this research applied triangulation, which is comparing and matching data from various sources to ensure consistency of findings. In addition, member checking was conducted, where the preliminary results of the research were presented to the participants to ensure that the findings truly reflected their experiences and views.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how students perceived the use of the application in practicing their English speaking skills. Interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions regarding their experiences, benefits, and challenges they faced while using the application. The results of these interviews are categorized as follows:

Table 1. Students' perceptions of using the application to practice English speaking skills

No	Categories
1	Better self-confidence
2	Better fluency and more accurate pronunciation
3	Better vocabulary acquisition
4	More active Interaction and Participation
5	Preference using the app over the conventional method
6	Most Preferred Features in the Application
7	Technical and application-related challenges

Sources: Research, 2025

Better Self-Confidence

The analysis indicated that before using the application, most students felt hesitant and afraid to speak in English. However, after a few times practicing through the Reallife English application, they became more confident and started to feel more comfortable in practicing conversations using this application.

"When I first tried this application, I felt anxious and lacked confidence. But after a few tries, the anxiety turned into excitement and confidence." (S5)

"I was initially afraid of being wrong and afraid of being judged by my interlocutors, but it turns out that in this application, there is no one to judge." (S6)

"Everyone who uses this application is also learning, using the application feels more comfortable than talking directly to people, so I feel more confident." (S10)

Students 5, 6, and 10 initially reported anxiety and fear of making mistakes when speaking, were not confident, worried about being judged, and getting negative judgments from interlocutors when speaking using the application. However, with the intensity of practicing several times, they felt a positive change. The application provides a safe and comfortable environment where all users are learning together, so there is no fear of being judged. This makes them feel more comfortable and confident speaking English with the application than speaking directly to people.

The observation results support this statement. At first, students 5, 6, and 10 seemed hesitant and anxious when starting and conducting conversations. They tended to get confused, jot down a few words first, or review the topics provided by the application before speaking. The duration of the conversation was short. They also turned off the call when they felt confused and afraid. However, after some practice, they showed a change in enjoying and being confident in having more extended conversations.

Better Fluency and More Accurate Pronunciation

The analysis showed that at the beginning of using the application, most students felt less fluent in speaking and often hesitated in pronunciation. They had difficulty adjusting intonation and rhythm when speaking. However, after using the application, hearing directly from native speakers, and receiving feedback from interlocutors, they felt more fluent and confident in their pronunciation. Conversations became more fluent and sounded more natural.

"I feel that my pronunciation is getting better because I often listen to other users speak English on this application and listen to the podcasts available on the application." (S7)

"I can hear how other people pronounce new words and get comments from my interlocutors on the wrong pronunciation, so it is easier for me to imitate them." (S8)

"The first time I used the application, I stuttered when speaking, but after a few days, now I am more fluent and do not have to think long before speaking." (S1)

The students experienced significant changes in fluency and pronunciation after using the application. At first, they stuttered, lacked confidence, and had difficulty pronouncing words correctly. However, through habitual conversations with other users, listening to podcasts, and receiving feedback on mispronunciations from interlocutors, they began to show changes. This experience made it easier for them to mimic the correct pronunciation, speak more fluently, and respond to conversations without having to think. This confirms that consistent use of the application makes a positive contribution to students' speaking skills.

Observations also confirmed that at first, the students tended to speak stammeringly and often paused to think before answering. While having conversations, they were not confident with their pronunciation, sometimes repeating words to change their pronunciation when speaking. However, with the intensity of practicing after a few times, they started to show better fluency and pronunciation in speaking. This confirms that consistent use of the application contributes positively to students' speaking ability.

Better Vocabulary Acquisition

Many students stated that they learned new vocabulary while using the app, both through live conversations and through in-app features.

"When talking to foreigners, I learn a lot of new words that I do not usually encounter in textbooks. (S5)

"Sometimes there are words that I do not know the meaning of, so I immediately translate them on Google Translate and I end up remembering the word for the next conversation." (S10)

"This application is beneficial in increasing vocabulary, especially from its podcast, TV series, movie, video call, and call features. I often find new words while talking, and I usually write them down to remember." (S3).

The students found the application very helpful in enhancing their vocabulary. At first, they often experienced limitations in finding the right words when speaking. However, through direct interaction with foreign speakers, they began to recognize new words not found in textbooks. When they encounter a word they do not understand, they are used to translating it immediately using Google Translate to make it easier to remember for the following conversation. In addition, features such as podcasts, TV series, movies, video calls, and in-application calls also contributed significantly to expanding their vocabulary. The students even made a habit of jotting down new words so that they could remember and use them later. This experience shows that active use of the application encourages students to continue learning and developing their vocabulary.

Observations also confirmed that at the beginning of using the application, many students found the limited vocabulary to be a challenge in speaking. They often had difficulty finding the right words when dialoging. However, over time, when practicing a lot, students actively recorded new vocabulary that they encountered while listening to *podcasts, watching TV and movie series*, or after having conversations in Call or Video Call features. In the following conversation, they try to develop the conversation by incorporating the new words they have learned, so that the conversation becomes more diverse.

More Active Interaction and Participation

The analysis indicated that at the beginning of using the application, students tended to be passive in conversations, listening more and hesitating to ask or answer. However, as time went by and after some practice, they became more active in interacting, more confident in asking questions, and more responsive in answering the interlocutor.

"At the beginning of using this application, I usually asked more questions than answers because I was hesitant and confused, but over time, I began to be able to balance the interaction with my interlocutors." (S1)

"I feel more comfortable talking to strangers through this application, getting good feedback, chatting whatever I want, until I do not see the duration, the conversation is also real like chatting with friends, but the difference is that this is through the application only." (S7)

Students' statements show that the use of the application has made a positive difference to their engagement and participation in communication. At first, students felt hesitant and

confused, so they asked more questions than they received answers to. However, over time, they began to be able to balance interactions with interlocutors. Able to maintain conversations on various topics by taking turns participating in the conversation. They also felt more comfortable talking to strangers through the app, received positive feedback, and could talk freely for a considerable duration. The conversations felt natural, like talking to a friend, even though it was done virtually.

Observations showed that in the beginning, students tended to ask more questions and give makeshift answers due to language limitations and relied on the notes they made before starting the conversation. However, after some practice, their interactions became more balanced, they took turns participating in the conversation, the conversation progressed more fluently and naturally, and they began to be active and more responsive to the interlocutor. They also started to discuss a variety of topics, so the interactions lasted longer than at the beginning of the trial.

Preference Using App Over Conventional Method

In interviews, students revealed that traditional methods were more boring and did not provide optimal speaking opportunities due to limited time, opportunities, and a less supportive environment. In contrast, using the Realife app provides a more enjoyable interactive experience and encourages active engagement in conversation.

"When learning in class, I rarely speak up because I am shy. But this application is more interesting, I can practice anytime and anywhere without fear of being judged." (S3)

"Conventional methods are more theoretical, usually just listening to the teacher is still important for learning grammar, but in this application, we directly practice with outsiders." (S4).

Students' statements indicate that the Realife application provides a more engaging and flexible learning experience than conventional classroom methods. Students feel that in class, they rarely speak up due to shyness and fear of judgment. However, through the application, they can practice speaking anytime and anywhere with more confidence. In addition, while conventional methods are important for understanding theory and grammar, the application provides an opportunity for students to directly practice speaking with foreign speakers, making learning more interactive and fun.

During the observation process, it was evident the most students were more enthusiastic when using the RealLife English application compared to when learning with conventional methods in the classroom. In classroom learning activities, students tend to be passive, only listening to the teacher or reading texts. During speaking sessions in the classroom, many of them appear shy and rarely raise their hands to speak. On the other hand, at the beginning of using the application, some students seemed hesitant, but after a few days of trying it, they appeared more active and confident in speaking English. Students seemed more free to speak, were not hesitant to try new vocabulary, and the duration of their conversations increased over time.

Most Preferred Features in the Application

The analysis indicated that students also revealed their most preferred features in the application, which they found very helpful in practicing English speaking skills.

The video call and call feature is a favorite feature because it provides a direct communication experience with foreigners. Students find this feature very helpful in speaking more fluently and confidently.

"I like the communication feature the most because I can talk directly with foreigners. It really helps me to practice speaking." (S7)

Podcasts, TV shows, and movie series are also students' favorite features because they can learn from movie characters and get tips on speaking skills.

"The TV series feature is fun because I can learn while listening to conversations according to the characters. I also often listen to podcasts on this app. Apart from adding vocabulary, the podcasts give us tips to improve our speaking skills." (S2)

In addition, the fire streak feature is considered very motivating because students can see how consistent they are in practicing.

"I am more motivated to practice every day because of this streak feature. I really do not want to break my record!" (S9)

Students' statements indicate that the various features in the ReaLife application provide an interesting and effective learning experience. *The video call and call feature is a favorite because it allows them to communicate directly with foreign speakers, thus helping to improve fluency and confidence in speaking. The podcast and TV & movie series features are also popular as they provide a more relaxed and enjoyable learning experience. Through these features, students can understand conversations according to the characters in the movie and get tips to improve their speaking skills and expand their vocabulary. Meanwhile, a fire streak is considered highly motivating as it helps students monitor the consistency of their practice. The challenge of maintaining the streak makes them more eager to practice every day so as not to break the record that has been achieved.*

From observations during the use of the application, it appears that the video call and call features are the most frequently used by students. They seem enthusiastic when having direct conversations with users from other countries. The podcast and TV & movie series features are also frequently used, especially when students are not making calls. Some students are seen attentively listening to podcasts while taking notes on new words. They also indicate that they enjoy the learning process. Additionally, the Fire Streak feature is observed to serve as a motivator in its own right. Some students state that they do not want to lose their daily records, so they consistently open the application every day. This indicates that the feature helps enhance motivation and consistency in practicing speaking.

Technical and Application-Related Challenges

The analysis indicated that some students experienced technical issues when using the application, such as unstable internet, advertisements, limited storage space on their devices, and the application being fully in English.

"Sometimes my internet connection is interrupted, the voice of the interlocutor is also sometimes tiny, so the conversation is interrupted in the middle." (S4)

"Sometimes, when you want to open a podcast or TV and movie series, you have to go through a long advertisement first, so it is annoying. Then, access to vocabulary in podcasts or TV and movie series is also limited because it must be premium" (S2)

"The full English application challenges me to keep learning more vocabulary. All the features are also in English. When communicating with the interlocutor as a beginner, sometimes I am still confused about what the interlocutor means. So when I do not know the meaning, I have to rush to open the translation application so that the interlocutor does not turn off the phone because we do not know what they mean". (S9)

Students' statements show that although the Realife application provides many benefits, they face some challenges. Some students experienced technical issues, such as unstable internet connections and a small voice of the interlocutor, which can cut off the conversation midway. In addition, long advertisements before accessing features such as podcasts or TV & movie series were considered annoying, and access to vocabulary in these features was limited for non-premium users. Another perceived challenge was the full use of English in the application, as well as all the features being in full English, requiring students to keep learning new vocabulary. As beginners, some students admitted that they were still often confused about what their interlocutors were saying. If there are words or sentences that they do not understand, they must quickly open the translator application so that they can immediately understand and respond to the conversation. This is done so that communication remains smooth and the interlocutor does not feel disturbed to the point of disconnecting the phone.

Observations confirmed that some students did experience technical problems when using the RealLife English application. The most common problem is an unstable internet connection, which causes the interlocutor's voice to become small or cut off in the middle of a conversation. In addition, before accessing features such as podcasts or TV & movie series, students often have to wait for long advertisements, which are considered to interfere with the smooth learning process. Not only that, access to vocabulary features in podcasts and TV & movie series is also limited to non-premium users, limiting students' opportunities to expand their vocabulary. They often have to open a translator to find out the meaning of the vocabulary in the podcast or TV series, or when they have difficulty understanding and responding to the other person during a conversation.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the use of the RealLife English application has a positive effect on the development of students' English speaking skills, despite some challenges faced. One of the most prominent positive impacts is the increase in students' self-confidence. At first, many students felt anxious, hesitant, and afraid to speak for fear of making mistakes or being judged by the other person. However, after a few practices using the app, they felt more comfortable and confident in speaking. A safe and supportive environment is one of the things that is influential for students, where all users are learning together, helping to reduce fear and increase student confidence (Acheckzai, 2024). They feel more relaxed and comfortable to speak English because they only interact with the camera,

as well as role-playing and voice calls using English conversation practice applications and halo applications they can speak freely without fear of making mistakes or improve communication skills with artificial intelligence (Adawiyah & Dalimunthe, 2024; Hakim & Rima, 2022; Mariam et al., 2022).

In the aspects of fluency and pronunciation, students also showed significant changes. Initially, they often stammered and hesitated in pronouncing words. However, through direct interaction with foreign speakers, listening to podcasts, and getting feedback from interlocutors, they began to speak more fluently, and their pronunciation became more natural. The practice of speaking directly with native speakers is very helpful in practicing speaking skills and practicing speaking directly with native speakers is very helpful in improving language skills, because it provides real experience in understanding pronunciation, intonation, and proper use of vocabulary in everyday contexts (Putra et al., 2023; Wahyuni & Efrianti, 2021). In addition, using language study applications to practice speaking among university students can also improve pronunciation, even though only with Google Translate, but can improve difficult words to practice speaking (Alkhalaf & Moafa, 2025; Wongsuriya, 2020).

Vocabulary acquisition is also one of the important results of this study because vocabulary mastery is an important key for students to develop effective speaking skills in English (Suryanto et al., 2021). Therefore, in the findings of this study, Students have high initiative by actively recording new vocabulary obtained from conversations, podcasts, and TV & movie series features in the application. Strategies such as translating words they do not understand using the translator application also help them remember vocabulary and use the word in the following conversation (Benmoqadem & Koumachi, 2024). Students can find new vocabulary that they previously did not know by utilizing Google Translate to find translations and understand the meaning of these words (Adawiyah & Dalimunthe, 2024). Students' vocabulary increased while using the Duolingo application, as the app presents new vocabulary daily to support learning (Fitria et al., 2023).

In addition, the RealLife English app also encourages active participation and more balanced interaction in conversations. At first, students tend to be passive and listen more or ask questions out of confusion. However, over time, they became more active, dared to ask questions, and were more responsive in answering questions, taking turns interacting, and maintaining conversations on various topics. This increasingly active interaction reflects the importance of an interactive learning environment to improve speaking skills (Atmazaki et al., 2021). Using the Zoom application, students will actively take on each other's roles in conversation because they can reduce the anxiety that occurs by not seeing the interlocutor directly (Dalimunte & Harahap, 2023). Meanwhile, using the SpeakApps platform, students actively participate in discussions with greater facility and responsibility in the management of the conversation (Aljohani & Hanna, 2021).

Students also prefer to use applications over conventional methods to practice speaking because they find the application more interesting and flexible. Mobile apps can motivate students to be more active in EFL activities (Klimova & Polakova, 2020). English conversation practice apps allow students to practice speaking anytime and anywhere, thus encouraging them to practice more often as needed. Learning using apps offers various methods of learning to speak that make the learning process more enjoyable for students, compared to

traditional methods that only rely on textbooks (Alsied, 2019). Meanwhile, by using the Talk English Application (TEA) on smartphones, students have easier access to daily conversation materials (Athoillah, 2022).

The features in the app also play an important role in supporting learning. The video call feature is considered very helpful because it provides the experience of communicating directly with foreign speakers, increasing confidence and speaking fluency. The podcast and TV & movie series features allow students to learn contextually and get tips to improve their speaking skills. Meanwhile, the streak API feature is an additional motivation for students to practice consistently. Features that promote active involvement and offer an enjoyable learning experience can enhance student motivation, leading to a more effective and sustainable learning process (Sa'diyah, 2021). Likewise, the Hello Talk application can effectively improve English speaking skills for high school students, with features such as Voice Room, Talking with native speakers, Calls, and voice notes (Rosilah & Ulfa, 2024).

However, behind these benefits, there are some challenges that students face. Technical problems such as an unstable internet connection and a small voice of the interlocutor become obstacles to a smooth conversation. Technical constraints are often an obstacle in maximizing language learning applications (Yuliawati & Suryadi, 2023). In addition, long advertisements before accessing some features, as well as limited access for non-premium users, are also obstacles. The use of full English in application, while effective for learning, is challenging for beginners who still struggle to understand conversations. To overcome this challenge, students often have to use the translator application to keep the conversation flowing quickly.

Although the RealLife English Application has some obstacles, the benefits felt by students are highly dominant. This RealLife English application makes a positive contribution to helping students practice their speaking skills by creating an interactive, flexible, and supportive learning environment, even though it is done independently. To maximize the benefits of practicing on the RealLife English application, students are advised to prepare topic-related questions before making random calls. Since the interlocutor is unknown, it is important to remain polite during the conversation. By utilizing the free call and video call features, students should practice frequently and maintain a good relationship with the speaker for the next practice opportunity.

Teachers who want to utilize this application for classroom teaching should plan carefully before asking students to practice English conversation by practicing it and giving examples directly to students. Since not all students have a high level of ability, the teacher should provide some sample questions and sample answers related to topics that might be developed from the topics available in the application before starting the conversation on a video call or call. Teachers can also encourage motivation by giving awards to students who are most active in interacting with the application.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the use of the RealLife English application has a positive effect on the development of students' English language skills. The application helps students' confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition. The features within the application, such

as video calls, podcasts, TV series & movies, and fire streak, proved to be helpful in creating an interactive learning experience and motivating students to practice consistently. Students also prefer the use of applications because they are considered more interesting and flexible than conventional learning methods.

However, the study also found some challenges faced by students, such as technical constraints related to the internet network, distracting advertisements, limited access to non-premium features, and the full use of the English language, which is challenging for beginners. Despite these obstacles, the benefits provided by the RealLife English app were highly dominant. The application successfully creates a customizable learning environment that can be used by students anytime and anywhere, thus contributing significantly to students' independent English proficiency, especially in practicing conversation.

Although this study shows positive results in the use of the RealLife English application as a medium for speaking practice, especially in conversation, there are some unavoidable limitations. These limitations include the small scale of the study, the limited number of participants, and the short duration of time. Therefore, further research is needed over a more extended period to ensure the effectiveness of the RealLife English application as an approach in developing speaking skills, especially in conversation. In addition, further research should also involve a larger number of participants and different levels of education to determine the extent to which this application is relevant and useful at various levels of education.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the publication of this article. The authors confirm that the data and content of the article are original and free from plagiarism.

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