The Effectiveness of Elsa Speak Application on Students' Speaking Skills at Tenth Grade of Senior High School in Tarakan

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ABSTRACT

English speaking skill is very crucial because this ability expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas in real situations through a dynamic and interactive process for personal and professional purposes. Despite the growing integration of AI-based language learning applications in EFL classrooms, there is still limited empirical evidence on the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application in improving the speaking skills. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of using ELSA Speak application on speaking skill of 10th grade students of Senior High School in Tarakan. The method employed in this study was a pre-experimental. The sample of this study was class X-5 consisting of 33 students, who were selected through cluster random sampling. The stages of the study were pre-test, treatments, and post-test. Treatment was given for 5 meetings. The pre-test and post-test focused on testing English language skills in the aspects of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Pre-test and post-test data were analyzed statistically using the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The results of the statistical analysis showed that the p-value of 0.00 was far below the operational standard of 0 05 with a Z score of -5.152 indicating that the treatments using ELSA Speak application showed a significant effect on speaking skill of 10th grade students of Senior High School in Tarakan. The 'study by topic feature in ELSA Speak application was the most effective feature in improving students' speaking skill because it provided contextual and relevant speaking exercises to real-life situations.

I. Introduction

Speaking skills are among the four most important English language skills besides listening, reading, and writing. These skills are not only important in their own right, however, all four are also interconnected and often support each other. [1] states that speaking skills are the most important to acquire foreign or second language learning. Speaking allows each learner to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in real time, facilitating the dynamic and interactive process of conversation that is crucial in the personal and professional setting. [2] claim that in language learning, speaking skills play a vital role in the success of communication. It allows learners to participate actively in a discussion, express their insights, and engage meaningfully with others. According to [3] speech is the physical realization of ideas, concepts, and assumptions that exist in human schema. When people speak, they translate their thoughts into spoken words, which makes communication happen. This act of verbal expression helps bridge the gap between abstract thought and concrete interaction so that others can understand and respond. [4] said that speaking is the ability to express ideas, participate in discussions, and convey thoughts coherently are the main keys to understanding and using language. Speaking skills are the cornerstone to achieving effective communication relationships by opens up many opportunities and allowing individuals to participate and increase confidence in various situations actively.

The importance of speaking skills makes teaching of speaking require careful consideration of the communicative aspects of learning. [5] brings up the issue of the difference between 'doing speaking' and 'teaching speaking'. 'Doing speaking' refers to speaking practice activities, while 'teaching speaking' refers to teaching speaking skills with explicit and systematic strategies.[5] He adds the teaching and learning of speaking is an essential component in any language classroom, not only to facilitate learning as the main means of communication in the classroom but also as an important part of the syllabus content and learning outcomes. The goal of teaching speaking is to focus on students' communication skills, as this is the only way that students can express themselves and learn about how social and cultural rules in a communicative environment. According to [6] teaching speaking is a cycle of transferring information about the parts of speaking in widening students' capacity to embed in the learning process and teach students to make orally expressed words, express their feelings, thoughts, and ideas, and engage students in a sense of connection by utilizing social knowledge about situations and topics. As a facilitator and classroom organizer, teachers have the responsibility to find ways for students to use and understand English well. [7] emphasizes language teachers need to plan, implement, monitor, and assess the teaching of speaking skills in a systematic and effective way. This comprehensive approach ensures that the teaching of speaking skills is structured and purposeful, allowing students to develop their speaking skills through targeted practice and constructive feedback.

In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language, making the process of teaching and learning English face serious problems. [8] highlight that English is a foreign language and that makes teaching and learning the language is difficult, even though some students have been learning it since they were in kindergarten. Teaching speaking has its challenges for educators. [9] point out that teachers guide learners to speak effectively, and they focus on accuracy, pronunciation, content, and other linguistic components. In addition, since students do not speak English as their mother tongue, they have a weak foundation in speaking competence. [10] note that this gap makes it challenging for teachers in teaching English skills effectively, especially in vocabulary comprehension, pronunciation, discourse, and social competence. In the other hand, [11] state that teachers have various difficulties when teaching speaking, namely helping students develop meaningful content in their speech, improving students' speaking accuracy, and using appropriate media to create an interesting and enjoyable learning environment. These challenges demand a planned and adaptive approach to teaching speaking, where teachers actively seek out learning methods or media that can support each student's particular learning needs.

Students experience several problems when starting to learn a new language, which can significantly impact their overall proficiency. One of the problems faced by students is the lack of vocabulary mastery. [12] state that in terms of language acquisition, the most important thing to understand is the availability of adequate vocabulary understanding. Lack of vocabulary can frustrate and make students reluctant to engage in speaking activities. Another problem is a lack of self-confidence in expressing their ideas, often fearing judgment from peers or teachers. [13] highlights that another problem that influences students' speaking skills is psychological problems related to emotions, physical conditions, and self-productivity such as low self-confidence, nervousness, and feeling embarrassed when speaking English. This psychological barrier can create a feeling of apprehension that makes speaking more difficult. Moreover, inaccurate pronunciation is a pervasive issue that affects nearly all learners; according to [1], the same problem that almost all of the students in the school face is a lack of good pronunciation and the use of structure when they speak. Additionally, [14] observed that many students find it difficult to pronounce words in English due to the difference in pronunciation of the alphabet in Indonesian and English. This difference causes the pronunciation of English words to become unfamiliar and difficult.

The researcher conducted preliminary research through observations, interviews, and document analysis at Senior High School in Tarakan from September 29th, 2024, until November 19th, 2024 (as shown in appendix 1). The problem of speaking skills became a major concern, especially among 10th-grade students. Many students struggled to communicate orally effectively; this can be seen in classroom activities that involve students' speaking skills, such as when students were asked to read aloud the text they had worked on in front of the class. Several factors contributed to their low speaking skills were lack of vocabulary mastery. This lack of vocabulary made it difficult for students to express their ideas more extensively and clearly, which often led to confusion and frustration when

speaking in English. In addition, the fear of making mistakes in the pronunciation of English words. The difference in phonetic systems and the lack of exposure to listening English words caused students often find it difficult to pronounce English words correctly, which impacted their clarity and confidence in speaking. Another problem is the lack of opportunities for students to speak in front of the class. Limited opportunities to practice directly made students were not used to speaking in front of others, which resulted in their lack of communication skills. And the last is lack of self-confidence. Many students feel hesitant or embarrassed when they had to speak English in front of the class, especially in front of their friends, due to fear of judgment or mistakes. This inhibits their courage to actively participate in speaking activities, which leads to a lack of progress in this skill. fear of making mistakes in the pronunciation of English words, lack of vocabulary mastered, lack of opportunities to practice speaking in a supportive environment, and lack of self-confident. Students often feel afraid to made mistakes when speaking which made them tend to be silent and reluctant to actively participate in oral-based learning activities.

Another problem faced by students is that the learning media used by teacher is less interesting, or monotonous, because of the lack of media known by teacher, students feel bored during the learning process. The media used by the teacher to deliver the material is PowerPoint. The use of PowerPoint as the only learning media has limitations in facilitating interactive activities that can stimulate students' speaking skills. PowerPoint may be effective for conveying information visually, but it does not optimally provide opportunities for students to actively participate in speaking practice. Effective learning requires more dynamic and interactive media to help students engage directly in real-world conversations or simulations. Therefore, it is important for teachers to used interesting learning media to help improve students' motivation and speaking skills in English subjects.

Technology has become an integral component in various aspects of life, including education in this era of globalization. According to [15], Technological advances allow information to be delivered quickly, accurately, and efficiently, thus supporting the learning process to be more effective. With the support of technology, students can engage with learning materials instantly, receive real-time feedback, and assess resources from across the country. Transforming traditional education to be more dynamic and interactive. Additionally, [16], highlights technology is taking on an increasingly larger role in helping students improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in foreign languages. With tools such as language learning apps, video tutorials, and interactive exercises, students can immerse themselves in the target language like never before. In addition [17] emphasize that the use of technology can significantly improve students' vocabulary, which includes aspects such as spelling, pronunciation and sentences. Various apps and digital platforms have been specifically designed to facilitate language learning, such as *Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, memrise, ELSA Speak, and many others, enabling* students to practice independently and interactively.

Teachers are expected to be able to apply technology in learning. [18] said that an alternative that can be used by teachers to make the class interesting is to use a learning application since it also triggers students to learn in an attractive way and improve their English skills without monotonous activities in the classroom. There are many language learning applications that can be used in learning one of them is the *ELSA speak. ELSA (English Learning Speech Assistant) Speak* is a language learning application that focuses on practicing communication skills, especially pronunciation. [19] states that *ELSA Speak* is an application designed to help students speak English simply, fluently, and confidently. The learning features in this app include word pronunciation exercises, real-world simulations, and choosing the topics you want to learn independently. With these features, ELSA Speak can encourage students to practice and become more comfortable with spoken language, making language learning more relevant and comfortable.

II. Method

A. Research Design

The research design in this research was pre-experimental. Pre-experimental research was justified in this study because it allowed the researchers to obtain preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application on students' speaking skills in a real classroom setting where random assignment and full experimental control were not feasible, making it suitable for

initial evaluation before more rigorous experimental designs are implemented. [20] explains in pre-experimental research, the researcher only examines one class and implements the intervention during the experiment. This research design involved only one group exposed to the intervention, without using a control or comparison group.

B. Subject of the Research

The population in this research consisted of 7 classes with a total of 217 students at tenth grade of Senior High School in Tarakan. This research used cluster random sampling technique. [21] said that cluster random sampling is similar to simple random sampling. Still, cluster sampling selects samples in groups rather than individuals (the sample unit is a group, not individuals). In this research, the researcher used a spinner application (https://wheelofnames.com/) to select the sample class for this research. Spinner selected class X-5 students as the research sample, with a total of 33 students.

C. Instrument in Collecting the Data

Research instruments are tools used to gather data from research samples in order to address specific research questions. The researcher utilized a speaking test for data collection in this research. Speaking tests were conducted to assess students' abilities before and after using the ELSA Speak application. In this research, the speaking test was conducted in two stages: pre-test and post-test. The speaking test was assessed using an analytic rubric consisting of five components: pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy, vocabulary use, and comprehension, each rated on a scale of 1–5. Content validity was established through expert judgment by two English teaching specialists who confirmed that the rubric aligned with the speaking skill objectives for tenth-grade students. Inter-rater reliability was ensured by involving two independent English teachers who scored the students' performances using the same rubric, and the results showed a high level of scoring consistency between the raters.

D. Data Analysis Technique

The researcher obtained data from speaking tests (pre-test and post-test), which were then be analysed using the speaking assessment scores. After the data were obtained, descriptive statistical and inferential statistical analysis were carried out. Descriptive statistics is a method concerned with collecting data and presenting it so that it provides useful information. There are several things that were tested or calculated in descriptive statistics, including: mean, median, and mode. Inferential statistics is a branch of statistics that analyses data to make conclusions about the population under-researched. Inferential statistics include all methods that deal with analysing data to draw conclusions about the whole data. Inferential statistics discusses analysing data and drawing conclusions related to parameter estimation and hypothesis testing. A few things related to the use of inferential statistics, such as: normality test, homogeneity test, and Wilcoxon signed-rank test.
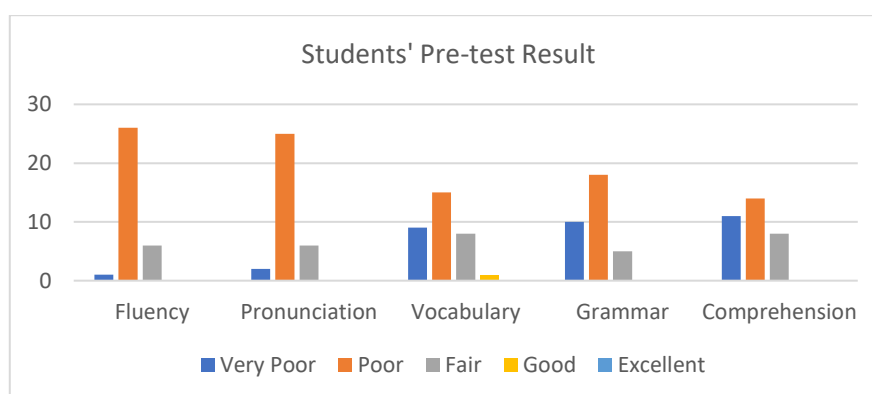
III. Results and Discussion

Fig 1. Students' Pre-Test Score Distribution

Overall, the pre-test results showed a consistently low level of speaking ability across all components, with fluency and pronunciation emerging as the weakest areas. Grammar also reflected limited proficiency, while comprehension displayed slightly more variation but remained at a low

level overall. Higher proficiency levels were largely absent across components, indicating minimal speaking competence prior to the treatment.
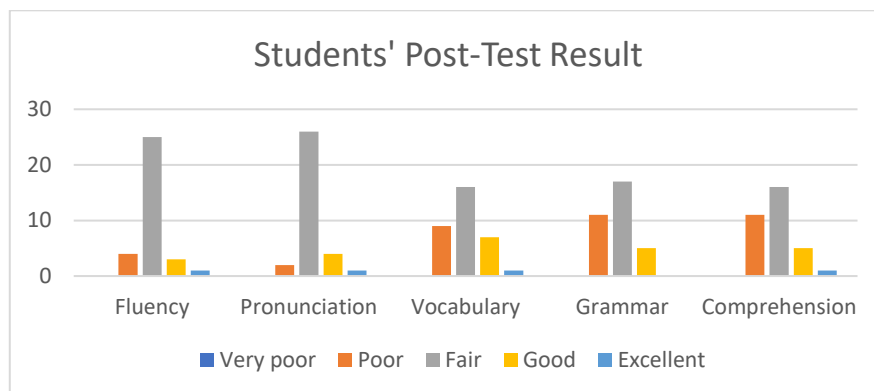

Fig. 2 Students' Post-test Score Distribution

The post-test results indicate a clear improvement in students' speaking performance, with most students reaching the fair level across all speaking components. Fluency and pronunciation showed the most consistent progress, as the majority of students clustered in the fair category and extreme low or high performances were minimal. Vocabulary displayed greater variation, suggesting uneven development among students, while grammar and comprehension remained relatively weaker, with more students still performing at the lower levels compared to other aspects. Overall, the distribution reflects a shift away from very low proficiency toward moderate competence following the treatment; detailed score distributions are presented in the corresponding tables.

A comparison between the pre-test and post-test results reveals a clear positive shift in students' speaking ability after the treatment. In the pre-test, students' performance was dominated by poor and very poor categories across all components, with fluency and pronunciation being the weakest areas and almost no students reaching higher proficiency levels. In contrast, the post-test results show that most students moved into the fair category, particularly in fluency and pronunciation, indicating noticeable improvement in these aspects. While vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension also showed progress, they remained relatively weaker compared to fluency and pronunciation, as some students were still classified at lower levels. Overall, the contrast between the two tests demonstrates a substantial improvement in speaking performance and a reduction in low-level proficiency following the implementation of the ELSA Speak application.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	33	20	64	40.12	10.559
Post-test	33	40	96	59.39	11.795
Valid N (listwise)	33				

Based on the descriptive statistics presented above, the pre-test scores of 33 students ranged from 20 to 64, with a mean score of 40.12 and a standard deviation of 10.559. These results indicate that the students' speaking ability prior to the treatment was relatively low. Following the implementation of the treatment, the post-test scores ranged from 40 to 96, with an increased mean of 59.39 and a standard deviation of 11.795. The increase in the mean score suggests a notable improvement in students' speaking skill as a result of the treatments. Moreover, the higher standard deviation in the post-test indicates greater variability in students' scores, implying that the level of improvement varied among individuals.

Table 2. Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]	Shapiro-Wilk

	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
pretest scores	.141	33	.094	.965	33	.364
posttest scores	.197	33	.002	.924	33	.023

The normality of the pre-test and post-test scores was examined using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which is recommended for sample sizes below 50. The results showed that the pre-test scores had a ρ-value of 0.364, which is greater than the significant level of 0,05, indicating that the data were normally distributed. However, the post-test scores had a ρ-value of 0.023, which less than 0,05, suggesting that the data were not normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that while the pre-test scores met the assumption of normality, the post-test scores violated this assumption.

Table 3. Test of Homogeneity

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.000	1	33	.993

Homogeneity of variances was tested using Levene's test, which evaluate whether the variance between groups is equal. The results revealed a Levence statistics of 0.000 with a significance level of 0.993 ($\rho > 0,05$), indicating that there is no significant difference in variances between the pre-test and post-test scores, which mean the homogeneity of variances was met.

Table 4. Ranks

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post-test – Pre-test	Negative Ranks	0[a]	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	33[b]	17.00	561.00
	Ties	0[c]		
	Total	33		

a. Post-test < Pre-test
b. Post-test > Pre-test
c. Post-test = Pre-test

Table 5. Test Statistics[a]

	Post-test – Pre-test
Z	-5.152[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on negative ranks.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of the data that is not normally distributed. The result showed that all the 33 students had higher post-test scores than their pre-test scores. With no ties of negative rank observed. The test statistics $Z = -5.152$, and the two tailed p-value was 0.000, indicating a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking skills after the treatment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the treatment had a significant effect on students' speaking skills.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the ELSA Speak application contributed positively to the improvement of students' speaking skills. The comparison between pre-test and post-test results indicates a clear shift from predominantly poor performance across all speaking components to a more balanced distribution, with most students reaching the fair level after the treatment. This improvement suggests that the use of AI-based pronunciation and speaking practice provided students with more effective learning support than conventional classroom practice alone.

The most notable improvement was observed in fluency and pronunciation, which were initially identified as the weakest aspects in the pre-test. The improvement in these components can be attributed to the immediate and individualized feedback provided by ELSA Speak, which allows

students to repeatedly practice pronunciation and speaking patterns at their own pace. This finding aligns with previous studies suggesting that AI-assisted language learning tools can enhance oral production by offering consistent feedback and increased opportunities for practice, particularly in EFL contexts where exposure to authentic spoken English is limited.

Vocabulary showed more varied development in the post-test, indicating that while the application supported pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary growth may require additional instructional strategies such as contextualized practice or explicit vocabulary instruction. Similarly, grammar and comprehension, although improved, remained relatively weaker compared to other components. This suggests that while ELSA Speak is effective in improving surface-level oral performance, such as pronunciation and fluency, it may be less effective in addressing deeper linguistic competence without complementary classroom instruction.

These findings align with the theoretical research presented in chapter II, which highlights the potential of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) to enhance students' academic performance. As noted by [24] the integration of technology, particularly mobile devices, into the learning process can significantly support the development of language skills. Moreover, this research findings primarily confirm, develop, and generate the result of the previous research that demonstrated the effectiveness of ELSA Speak application on students' speaking skill.

The research conducted by [25] found that ELSA Speak improved students overall speaking performance and was appropriate for classroom use. This finding of this research were consistent with theirs, as students in this research also showed improvement in their overall speaking abilities after being treated using ELSA Speak. Similarly, [26] emphasized that ELSA Speak was effective because it was user-friendly and supported students in mastering pronunciation and vocabulary. This aspect is clearly reflected in this research, where students reported feeling more confident in their pronunciation and word choice after using the application.

The research conducted by [27] reported significant improvement in grammar and pronunciation and noted students' positive attitudes and enthusiasm when using the application. These findings were in line with this research, where students showed interest and increasing confidence throughout the treatments. [28] also highlighted that the application encouraged autonomous learning, which was consistent with this research, where students gradually practiced speaking independently through ELSA Speak's features.

This research also generates new contributions that were not explicitly addressed in previous research. While previous research generally concluded that ELSA Speak improved speaking skills broadly, this research provides more detailed insight by identifying which specific aspects of speaking skill showed the most significant improvement. In this research, the most noticeable developments in students' speaking skills were fluency and pronunciation. This can be attributed to the application's core features, which focus on speech recognition, immediate feedback, repetitive practice, and structured pronunciation training, as stated by [29], ELSA Speak provides instruction in key areas of pronunciation, including vowels, consonants, and word stress, through a structured and focused method. The features directly target phonological awareness and speech flow, making them highly impactful in shaping learners' fluency and accuracy in articulation, this is supported by [30], explained that the application is capable of accurately evaluating users' speech and comparing it to native speaker pronunciation. Additionally, statistical approach used was the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test due to the non-normal distribution of post-test data.

The effectiveness of the ELSA Speak application during this research lay in its structured, interactive, and personalized feedback. Students could repeat phrases, receive their scores, and track their progress. These features enabled them to practice at their own pace, both in and outside the classroom. The "improving pronunciation" and "study by topic" features were particularly impactful, as they provided real-world dialogue scenarios and reinforced the learning of speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation and fluency. This is in line with [31], explained that ELSA Speak offers comprehensive instruction supported by native-speaker audio, targeted speaking exercises, specific feedback, and simulated conversations. Furthermore, the application's ability to provide immediate, individualized feedback through voice recognition software played a key role in improving students' pronunciation, this supports the statement by [32], who noted that the app allows users to repeat words while receiving instant feedback on their speech, helping them to gradually correct errors and

improve accuracy through consistent repetition. The structure of the app, which allows for self-paced and repeated practice, gave learners greater control over their learning process.

Despite its benefits, there were challenges in implementing ELSA Speak. Some students lacked access to stable internet or compatible devices. [33] highlighted that ELSA Speak requires a stable internet connection to function properly, and in areas with limited connectivity, users may struggle to use the application effectively. Aside from technological challenges, students also faced internal barriers. Some were hesitant to speak due to low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, or fear of making mistakes. However, over the course of the treatments, these barriers began to lessen. The application helped reduce speaking anxiety by allowing private practice, where students could make mistakes without being judged. Nevertheless, a few students continued to struggle with organizing their ideas or responding spontaneously, which suggests that additional support may be needed for lower-proficiency learners.

Future researchers may encounter several limitations when using the ELSA Speak application in classroom-based studies. One potential limitation was the requirement for stable internet access and compatible digital devices. In this research, some students experienced technical issues, such as slow internet or application errors, which could hinder their participation and limit the effectiveness of the treatment. In schools with limited infrastructure, this issue might be more prominent. Another limitation was related to students' digital literacy. Not all students were familiar with how to operate the application independently, especially in the early meetings. The application also primarily focused on pronunciation and fluency, which made it less effective in providing feedback on other components such as grammar and content organization. Future researchers who aim to improve broader speaking components may need to supplement ELSA Speak with other instructional tools. Furthermore, the speaking tasks within ELSA Speak were designed for individual practice and did not provide opportunities for collaborative speaking or spontaneous conversation, which are essential for communicative competence. This may limit its effectiveness in promoting interactional skills.

In relation to the research question, which inquired whether the use of ELSA Speak application has a significant effect on students' speaking skill, the data support the alternative hypothesis. Since the ρ-value $< 0,05$, the null hypothesis was rejected (H_o) and the alternative hypothesis is accepted (H_a). Consequently, it can be concluded that the ELSA Speak application has a significant effect on students' speaking skill.

Overall, the findings imply that ELSA Speak is an effective supplementary tool for enhancing students' speaking skills, particularly in fluency and pronunciation. However, the results also highlight the importance of integrating AI-based applications with teacher-guided instruction to support balanced development across all aspects of speaking. Future research is recommended to employ more rigorous experimental designs and longer treatment periods to further examine the long-term impact of AI-assisted speaking applications on EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

IV. Conclusion

This research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of ELSA Speak application on students' speaking skill at tenth-grade of Senior High School in Tarakan. This research employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design, specifically using a one-group pre-test and post-test model. A total 33 students from class X-5 participated in this research, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics to determine the significant of the observed improvement. the statistical analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, which was selected due to the non-normal distribution of the post-test scores. The test yielded a Z-value of -5.152 and a p-value of 0.000, which is less than 0,05. This finding confirming that the ELSA Speak application had a significant effect on students speaking skill.

The essential finding of this research was that ELSA Speak meaningfully enhanced students' confidence, and speaking skill especially in fluency and pronunciation. Through consistent, individualized, and interactive practice, students became more comfortable speaking English, even those who initially lacked confidence or vocabulary. The application's features allowed students to practice independently and receive real-time feedback, which helped reduce anxiety and encouraged self-directed learning. Although technological and linguistic challenges were present, the overall result shows that digital tools like ELSA Speak can effectively support speaking development in

classroom settings. Therefore, the improvement was not only reflected in the test scores but also in students' classroom behavior, engagement, and willingness to speak in English.

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