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ELT in Local and Global Lives: from Policy to Classroom Practices

Using ELSA Speak Application in Learning Speaking Skills: A Case study in Social Class of SMAN 2 Kota Serang

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to find out the use of Elsa Speak application in learning speaking skills at the 11th grade of social classes in SMAN 2 Kota Serang. In conducting the research, the researcher used case study qualitative research. The researcher used purposive sampling in selecting participants who had experienced using Elsa Speak. In collecting data, the researcher used observation, documentation and structured in-depth interviews that were open-ended. The interview was conducted directly at the school and the questions consisted of three important indicators namely the learning process, difficulties, and advantages of using Elsa Speak application that were open-ended and explored deeper by the researcher. The data was analyzed using Miles & Huberman, 2014 techniques. The result of this study shows that the students enjoy the process of learning speaking and they can improve their speaking skill well. Moreover, the students' felt motivated to explore all features in Elsa Speak application as well as their speaking practices. The students who struggled using ELSA Speak for learning speaking are caused by external factors like insufficient capacity of the device. While the students who felt helpful by the use of ELSA Speak during the speaking learning process are who consistently use it. In short, Students become more interested and passionate in learning speaking when they use and explore ELSA speak application in English class.

Keywords: Elsa Speak Application; Students; Speaking Skills.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are the ability to verbally communicate ideas, opinions and feelings to an individual or group, either in person or over the phone. According to Corbett (2018) speaking skills are abilities that leads to efficient communication. It enables us to communicate verbally and in a way that is understandable to the listener. With his opinion, it supports the researcher to claim that speaking ability is important to be obtained and this skill also needs to be combined with other abilities, especially listening.

At the high school level, more efforts are needed to help students enjoy their lessons so that they can improve their speaking skills. Reporting from research conducted by Afandi (2020) most students are not interested in improving their language skills due to lack of vocabulary, difficulty in using grammar in speaking, and most often found is lack of confidence in speaking English. Relying on Wahyuningsih (2020) this could be due to the absence of sufficient speaking practice as they only practice using books and assessments tend to be biased. Therefore, students may forget the material

without knowing the mistakes or correct things from the exercises they have done. Thus, it can be said that we must increase our efforts to improve students' speaking skills.

Currently, there are many software and digital platforms that provides tools for learning languages especially in speaking skills such as Duolingo, British Council, Memrise etc. Recently, there has been one application that is known to improve English speaking skills that is called Elsa Speak. The application includes variety of features, such as voice recognition and talkative dictionary which are the artificial intelligence-based tools application used to measure speaking and listening abilities for EFL Students. Elsa Speak system analyse what students say and gives them feedback for improvement, including their speaking scores. With the help of artificial intelligence, this application can provide learners with an engaging experience in learning speaking skills.

Based on the pre-observation that has conducted on 6th of March 2023 at SMAN 2 Kota Serang, the English teacher used Elsa Speak application as a learning media to improve students' speaking skills. This is related to the discussion of AI-based learning applications that are widely discussed based on the previous paragraphs. According to the researcher's interview with the English teacher, she revealed some learners still have difficulty in speaking even though they have used Elsa Speak application as their learning media. Some other students even felt that there was no difference before and after they use it, each of them has a different perception of using the application. Therefore, the researcher is interested in examining the causes of difficulties for some learners who have used Elsa Speak application and what other learners think of using the application as a media to learn speaking skills.

Recognizing the importance of supporting the learning of speaking skills and also the problems that students experience in learning this skill, the researcher felt the need to examine learners in using Elsa Speak as one of an artificial intelligence application as a learning media to improve their speaking skills. Therefore, the researcher tries to find answers by conducting research to observe and explain the causes of the weaknesses and strengths of learners in learning speaking skills using Elsa Speak application.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach. this study is all about gathering detailed information about what the participants experienced. These characteristics of phenomenological research were met by this study, which aimed to explore learners' perception regarding the features of using Elsa Speak application in learning speaking skills.

In this study, the researcher chose the social classes of 11th grade students at SMAN 2 Kota Serang which consists of 200 students. The researcher used 20% of the population (40 students), as participants to carry out observations and 5% of the population (10 students) to be interviewed. It consists of students who have experienced in using Elsa Speak and were willing to be participants in this study.

For data collection technique, this study used observation, interview, and documentation. The researcher used the participatory observation in this study. the researcher conducted direct questions and answers to the English teacher at the school for the interview. The documentation that will be included in the research is the lesson plan by the 11th grade English teacher at SMAN 2 Kota Serang. The author's steps to analyse the data are as follows: reduction of data, display of data, and conclusion drawing. As a data validity technique this undergraduate thesis used triangulation.

RESULT

Based on the results of interviews with students regarding the learning process, the researcher found that on average students use the Elsa Speak application three times a week according to the English lesson schedule in class. The students are initially had difficulty in their first use but over time, they became familiar to the features and limitations of the application. The Results of this interview also reinforce the findings presented by (김도훈, 2016), which said, "In an effort to incorporate technology into the teaching and learning process, everyone needs time to adapt." Moreover, the researchers also found that the difficulty of going through the process of using the Elsa Speak application at school can transform students into benefits and conveniences that are worth the time spent learning.

Based on the observation regarding the learning process in using Elsa Speak application, the researcher found that all students have used the application more than once. Some of them even use the application for warming up out of English lessons even before the lesson starts. In this case the researcher can conclude that the students are very enthusiastic to learn English at school, even though they learn it three times a week in the class schedule

Apart from interviews and observations, researchers also obtained documentation in the form of lesson plans owned by the English teacher. From the documentation obtained, the researcher found that the Elsa Speak application has become a teaching tool used by the 11th grade English teacher at SMAN 2 Kota Serang. In the scientific learning model (Student centered approach) and exposition discovery learning, the English teacher uses Elsa Speak as a medium for students to learn the material of Asking and Giving Opinion. After that students will be mobilized to compose sentences and practice them in everyday life. In this case students apply intensive and imitative learning as explained by (Hughes, 2013), "Intensive speaking involves the production of a limited amount of language in a very controlled context, on the other hand, Imitative speaking is the ability to imitate a word or phrase or perhaps a sentence.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings, Interviews showed that 20% of participants admitted to having difficulties and the remaining 80% were helped by Elsa Speak. The observation results proved that the

learners successfully practiced their speaking skills as seen from their fluency in speaking in front of the class according to the English teacher's instructions in class. The documentation shows that English teachers have used Elsa Speak application as a learning media well, proven by the existence of Elsa Speak application as one of the learning tools and learners who are able to use the AI Roleplay and Dictionary features to learn vocabularies as well as the interaction and video call features to practice comprehension and fluency. Relying on the results above, the researcher believes that learning using the Elsa Speak application is worth taking into consideration, regarding how the learning process and learners' perceptions of the application. Elsa Speak could encourage students to learn speaking skills with the program and features in the application.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion of the data collected and analysed, it can be concluded that this research has three themes. These themes are the learning process using the Elsa Speak application, the difficulties in using the Elsa Speak application and the benefits gained in using the Elsa Speak application. In the learning process, the researcher found that almost all students had difficulties using Elsa Speak application in the first use. But as time progressed, students could adapt well in the learning process. They listened to the teacher's explanation of the material in the pre-activity, they were excited to use the Elsa Speak application in the core activity, and they demonstrated outstanding implementation of what they had learned in the post-activity. However, there are some students who still have difficulties in using Elsa Speak to learn speaking skills. The researcher found the cause of the difficulties experienced by the learners related to external factors, including difficulty in getting a signal, insufficient phone quality, and lack of spare time used to comprehend the Elsa Speak application. While in the theme of advantages obtained by students in learning speaking skills using Elsa Speak application, the researcher found that almost all learners claimed to be helped in terms of Pronunciation, Vocabulary Mastery, Comprehension, Fluency and Consistency. Hence this supports their success in learning speaking skills.

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