Students' Perceptions of Using Falou Application to Improve Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract

This study explores English Department students' perceptions of using the Falou application to improve their English speaking skills through a descriptive qualitative approach. Three students from the English Department at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara in Medan, North Sumatra, were selected using purposive sampling and interviewed using semi-structured interviews to examine their experiences with the application. Grounded in Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) theoretical framework, the research addressed three key questions: students' perceptions of Falou's effectiveness, the most beneficial features, and challenges encountered during usage. Data analysis using thematic analysis revealed predominantly positive perceptions, with participants reporting increased confidence and improved speaking practice opportunities. The most effective features identified were pronunciation training with immediate feedback (94.4% positive rating), oral practice sessions with progressive structure (88.9%), conversation simulations providing realistic scenarios (88.9%), and comprehensive speaking assessments (77.8%). However, participants also faced significant technical challenges including audio quality fluctuations (61.1% reported concerns), network connectivity issues (61.1%), voice recognition delays (mixed ratings with only 38.9% positive), and severely limited offline access capabilities (only 5.6% found it adequate). The findings suggest that while mobile applications like Falou offer promising opportunities for autonomous English speaking practice among Indonesian university students, successful implementation requires robust technical infrastructure, comprehensive user support, and pedagogical design that addresses diverse learner needs in developing country contexts where internet connectivity remains inconsistent.

Keywords: Falou Applicstion, English Speaking Skill, Students Perceptions, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)

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Latar Belakang Penelitian

In the development of English in Indonesia, speaking ability has become a highly prioritized skill for all those who learn English - from elementary to secondary school students, university students, and the general public who learn independently. The ability to speak in English is considered the main key to communicate effectively in a global context (Lauder, 2008; Mattarima& Hamdan, 2011). This is inseparable from the demands of the era of globalization and increasingly fierce international competition, where the ability to communicate in English is one of the essential skills to compete in the international job market and access global opportunities (Panggabean,

2015). The need for good English language skills is also driven by the development of information and communication technology that connects Indonesia with the international world.

Speaking serves as a cornerstone for English language acquisition as it activates language and knowledge in practical contexts. When learners speak, they must synthesize grammatical structures, vocabulary, cultural understanding, and contextual appropriateness in real time (Harmer, 2007). This active production helps to strengthen linguistic knowledge and build confidence. Furthermore, as Thornbury (2005) notes, speaking skills create the foundation for other oral communication abilities

and maintain a symbiotic relationship with listening comprehension.

Although the importance of English speaking skills has been widely recognized, in practice, many Indonesian learners face obstacles in developing this ability (Mukminin et al., 2015; Megawati, 2016). Some of the inhibiting factors include: lack of authentic speaking practice opportunities, high language anxiety, learning methods that still focus on grammar rather than communication, and lack of confidence in using English (Exley, 2005; Sayuri, 2016). The use of technology in language learning, especially mobile applications, has become a trend in an effort to overcome these challenges (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Klimova, 2018).

To support the development of English speaking skills, various learning methods and applications have been developed. Previous research shows that the utilization of digital technology and language learning applications can help improve students' speaking skills (Hwang et al., 2016; Chen, 2016). However, there is still a gap in research regarding students' perceptions and experiences in using specialized learning apps to improve speaking skills in the Indonesian context (Yudhiantara& Nasir, 2017). One of the innovations in language learning is Falou app which is specifically designed to improve students' speaking skills.

Falou, an English language learning app, offers a variety of interesting features to improve speaking skills. The app utilizes speech recognition technology to analyze users' pronunciation, providing instant feedback on everyday conversations in English (Putu Ratni, 2024). Falou's interactive design focuses on developing speaking skills with practice, immediate feedback and realistic conversation simulations, providing great learning flexibility. The app also personalizes learning materials according to the user's ability level, making learning more effective. Falou's supportive learning environment helps users gain confidence in speaking English without fear of mistakes.

This research is important because it provides a solution for students who want to improve their English speaking skills, but are hampered by a lack of environmental support. The "Falou" app allows them to practice anytime and anywhere without the need to interact directly with others. This is especially beneficial for students who are shy or lack confidence, so they can practice comfortably using a smart phone. In addition, the app also provides new

English phrases and expressions that can be applied in daily life.

Based on this background, this study aims to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of Falou app in improving English speaking skills. Specifically, this study sought to: (1) identify the features of Falou app that are considered most helpful in improving speaking skills; (2) analyze the challenges students face in using Falou app; and (3) evaluate students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Falou app in improving English speaking confidence.

This study is based on the theoretical framework of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) developed by Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008). MALL theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how mobile technologies can facilitate effective language learning by leveraging the unique affordances of mobile devices such as portability, connectivity, context-awareness, and personalization (Crompton & Burke, 2018). MALL emphasizes the importance of authentic, situated learning experiences that can occur anytime and anywhere, making it particularly relevant for speaking skill development which benefits from frequent, contextual practice (Burston, 2014). The theory also highlights the significance of learner autonomy and self-directed learning, which are crucial for developing communicative competence outside formal classroom settings (Reinders & Pegrum, 2017).

By understanding students' perceptions of the use of Falou application through the MALL theoretical lens, this study is expected to make a theoretical contribution in the development of mobile technology-based learning models for English speaking skills. Practically, the results of this study can be an input for language learning app developers and educators in designing learning strategies that integrate mobile technology to improve students' speaking skills.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to explore the perceptions of English Department students regarding the use of the Falou application in improving English speaking skills. The interpretive paradigm was selected as it focuses on understanding the deeper meaning of social phenomena and subjective individual experiences through the perspectives of the

participants themselves (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This paradigm allows researchers to explore how individuals make sense of their experiences and construct meaning in specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate for this study due to its capacity to reveal in-depth experiences, views, and subjective perceptions from the participants' perspectives, providing rich, contextual insights that quantitative methods might overlook (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The research was conducted at the English Department of Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. The target population comprised English Department students who had experience using the Falou application in their English language learning activities. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants based on predetermined criteria, specifically their direct experience with the Falou application for English speaking practice. This non-probability sampling technique was chosen because it allows researchers to deliberately select information-rich cases that can provide in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2015; Palinkas et al., 2015). The inclusion criteria for participant selection were: (1) currently enrolled as an English Department student, (2) had used the Falou application for at least one month, and (3) willing to share their experiences and perceptions openly. A total of three participants were selected for this study.

Data collection was conducted using two complementary instruments: a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. This combination of instruments was designed to facilitate data triangulation, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings (Denzin, 2012; Flick, 2018). The use of multiple data sources allows researchers to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon by cross-verifying information obtained through different methods (Carter et al., 2014).

The first instrument was a structured questionnaire consisting of 15 items designed to gather preliminary data about participants' experiences and perceptions of the Falou application. The questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree) to measure the degree of agreement with statements related to the application's effectiveness and usability. This scale format allowed participants to express varying levels of perception while providing structured data that could be qualitatively analyzed (Joshi et al., 2015). The questionnaire functioned as an exploratory tool to identify key themes requiring deeper investigation through interviews (Jamshed, 2014; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The items covered user experience, perceived benefits for speaking skills, challenges encountered, feature preferences, and overall satisfaction. In addition to the scaled items, open-ended questions were included to allow participants to elaborate on their ratings and provide context for their responses. Although the questionnaire employed a numerical scale, the data were analyzed qualitatively by examining patterns in responses, identifying themes, and interpreting the narrative explanations provided alongside the ratings rather than through statistical calculations (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Jackson & Trochim, 2002). This approach aligns with qualitative research principles where numerical data serve as a springboard for understanding participants' subjective experiences and meanings (Sandelowski et al., 2009).

The second instrument was semi-structured interviews, serving as the primary method for in-depth data collection. Semi-structured interviews offer flexibility to explore emergent themes while maintaining focus on core research questions (Kallio et al., 2016; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interview protocol was developed based on preliminary questionnaire findings, particularly focusing on items that received diverse ratings or required further clarification. This enabled deeper exploration of specific themes and allowed participants to explain the reasoning behind their questionnaire responses. Each interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes and was conducted according to participants' preferences, either face-to-face or via video conferencing platforms. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Interview questions addressed detailed experiences with Falou features, perceptions of effectiveness in improving speaking skills, comparisons with other learning methods, motivational factors, and suggestions for improvement.

Result and Discussion

Based on data obtained through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews,

this study revealed predominantly positive student perceptions of the Falou application for English speaking practice. The integration of both instruments provided comprehensive insights into students' experiences, perceived benefits, and challenges encountered during application usage.

1. Students' Positive Perceptions of Falou Application in Improving English Speaking Skills

Item	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Falou improves my speaking skills	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
2	Falou increases my speaking confidence	27.8%	50.0%	16.7%	5.5%	0%
3	Falou motivates me to practice speaking	38.9%	44.4%	11.1%	5.6%	0%
4	Falou provides supportive learning environment	44.4%	38.9%	16.7%	0%	0%
5	I recommend Falou to other students	22.2%	55.6%	16.7%	5.5%	0%

The questionnaire data revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions toward the Falou application's effectiveness. A substantial 88.9% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that Falou improved their speaking skills (Item 1), while 77.8% reported increased speaking confidence (Item 2). These quantitative findings were further illuminated through semi-structured interviews, which revealed nuanced variations in how participants experienced and evaluated the application's impact on their learning.

Participant 1, who consistently selected "Strongly Agree" across items 1-4 in the questionnaire, provided rich contextual explanation for these high ratings during the interview: "I understand speaking practice well using this application. My confidence has increased significantly since I started using Falou. I feel enthusiastic to continue practicing and would definitely recommend this application to my friends".

This participant's ratings align directly with the qualitative depth of their experience. The phrase "understand speaking practice well" explains why they strongly agreed with Item 1 regarding skill improvement, suggesting that the application successfully facilitated not just performance gains but also metacognitive awareness of effective practice strategies. Their emphatic statement about significantly increased confidence provides the experiential foundation for their strong agreement with Item 2, revealing that confidence building extended beyond mere comfort to encompass sustained enthusiasm for continued practice, which corresponds with their strong agreement on Item 3 (motivation to practice).

The participant's willingness to recommend the application to friends, reflected in both the questionnaire (Item 5) and the interview statement, indicates satisfaction that transcends personal benefit to include social validation. In the Indonesian context, where speaking anxiety frequently inhibits English communication (Anandari, 2015; Fitriani et al., 2015), this level of confidence gain represents a particularly significant outcome that addresses a fundamental psychological barrier to speaking skill development.

Participant 2, whose questionnaire responses clustered around "Agree" with occasional "Neutral" ratings, particularly for Items 2 and 3, offered a more measured perspective during the interview: "I understand the practice adequately, and I can see some benefits in the application. My confidence has increased somewhat, though not dramatically. I understand the application effectively and find it helpful for basic practice".

The qualifying language in this participant's interview responses—"adequately," "some benefits," "somewhat"—provides crucial context for understanding their questionnaire pattern of agreeing but not strongly agreeing with effectiveness statements. Their characterization of confidence increase as "not dramatic" directly explains their "Neutral" response to Item 2, revealing that while positive change occurred, it fell short of transformative impact. This

measured evaluation suggests a learner who approaches technology adoption with analytical skepticism while remaining open to recognizing genuine, if incremental, benefits.

The distinction this participant drew between "adequate understanding" and dramatic improvement indicates successful basic engagement with the application's features, but limited progression to advanced proficiency levels. Their description of Falou as "helpful for basic practice" contextualizes why they agreed but did not strongly agree with Item 1 regarding skill improvement—the application addressed foundational needs but may have lacked the advanced features or pedagogical depth required for substantial development beyond elementary competence.

This response pattern illustrates important individual variation in technology-mediated learning outcomes, reflecting differences in initial proficiency levels, learning style preferences, or extent of feature engagement. The moderate satisfaction expressed suggests that while the application provided value, it operated more as a supplementary tool rather than a comprehensive learning solution for this particular user.

Participant 3, whose questionnaire responses showed progression from "Neutral" on some items to "Agree" on others, revealed an interesting developmental trajectory during the interview: "Although I started with limited understanding, I can see gradual improvement in my speaking practice. My confidence is slowly building as I become more familiar with the application features".

This participant's acknowledgment of starting with "limited understanding" provides essential context for their initial "Neutral" ratings on Items 1 and 2 in the questionnaire, suggesting that early uncertainty about the application's interface and pedagogical approach created barriers to immediate effectiveness. However, their recognition of "gradual improvement" and "slowly building" confidence explains the shift toward "Agree" ratings as familiarity increased, indicating that the application's value became more apparent over time as the participant developed technological literacy and feature utilization skills.

The explicit connection between becoming "more familiar with the application features" and confidence development suggests that the learning curve associated with technology adoption significantly influenced perceived effectiveness. This finding emphasizes that initial neutral or reserved perceptions may not reflect inherent application limitations but rather the adaptation period required for users to fully leverage available features. For this participant, persistence through initial uncertainty yielded meaningful benefits, though the gradual nature of improvement may have prevented the strong positive evaluations expressed by Participant 1.

This developmental pattern highlights the critical importance of comprehensive onboarding support and progressive feature introduction in mobile language learning applications. Users who require extended adaptation periods may benefit from scaffolded guidance that gradually introduces functionality rather than presenting all features simultaneously, potentially reducing initial cognitive load and accelerating the transition from uncertainty to confident, effective usage.

The integration of questionnaire data with interview narratives reveals that while 88.9% of participants perceived the application as effective (Items 1-2), the nature and intensity of this effectiveness varied considerably based on individual factors including initial confidence levels, technological literacy, learning style preferences, and adaptation capacity. The 83.3% who reported feeling motivated to continue practice (Item 3) and the similar proportion who would recommend the application (Item 5) suggest that despite variation in satisfaction intensity, the application successfully created positive enough experiences to sustain engagement and warrant peer recommendation for most users.

2. **Most Effective Features of Falou Application**

Item	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Pronunciation training provides helpful feedback	50.0%	44.4%	5.6%	0%	0%
2	Conversation simulation helps	38.9%	50.0%	11.1%	0%	0%

	practice real scenarios					
3	Oral practice sessions are well-structured	33.3%	55.6%	11.1%	0%	0%
4	Speaking assessment gives detailed feedback	27.8%	50.0%	16.7%	5.5%	0%
5	Immediate feedback is valuable for learning	44.4%	44.4%	11.2%	0%	0%

The questionnaire data demonstrated strong appreciation for Falou's core features, with pronunciation training receiving the highest positive ratings (94.4% agree/strongly agree on Item 6), followed closely by immediate feedback mechanisms (88.8% on Item 10) and conversation simulation (88.9% on Item 7). Interview data provided rich explanations for these high ratings while revealing how different participants prioritized and utilized various features based on their specific learning needs and goals.

Participant 1, who strongly agreed with Item 6 (pronunciation training) and Item 10 (immediate feedback) in the questionnaire, elaborated on the specific mechanisms that made these features valuable: *"The pronunciation training is really helpful—it corrects my pronunciation*

immediately and shows me exactly where I need to improve".

This participant's emphasis on immediate correction directly explains their strong agreement with both Items 6 and 10, revealing that the temporal proximity of feedback to production was a critical effectiveness factor. The phrase "shows me exactly where I need to improve" indicates that the feedback went beyond binary right/wrong indicators to provide diagnostic information, addressing a fundamental challenge in autonomous learning where qualified instructors are typically unavailable for real-time guidance.

The specific focus on pronunciation and immediate feedback, rather than mentioning all available features, suggests this participant prioritized accuracy development and error correction in their learning approach. This selective feature engagement demonstrates how learners strategically utilize application affordances that align with their perceived needs and learning goals.

Participant 2, who provided uniformly high ratings across all feature-related items (6-10), offered an expansive evaluation during the interview: *"All features are beneficial and work together seamlessly! The pronunciation training is excellent for correcting my accent, the oral practice keeps me engaged with varied exercises, the conversation simulation provides realistic scenarios, and the speaking assessment gives me detailed feedback".*

The exclamatory tone and comprehensive enumeration of features explain this participant's consistently high questionnaire ratings, revealing an appreciation for the application's integrated pedagogical approach. Unlike Participant 1's focused engagement, this participant recognized and valued the complementary relationships between different features—pronunciation training addressing accuracy,

oral practice providing systematic skill building, conversation simulation offering authentic communication contexts, and speaking assessment delivering comprehensive performance evaluation.

The specific mention of features working "together seamlessly" provides crucial context for understanding why this participant rated all items highly—they experienced the application not as a collection of discrete tools but as a coherent learning ecosystem where different components supported and reinforced each other. This holistic engagement likely contributed to more comprehensive skill development across multiple dimensions of speaking competence.

The characterization of pronunciation training as "excellent for correcting my accent" reveals awareness of accent modification as a distinct learning goal beyond basic pronunciation accuracy. This sophisticated perspective suggests the application successfully addressed not only fundamental phonological features but also more nuanced aspects of spoken English that contribute to intelligibility and confidence. The appreciation for "varied exercises" in oral practice (corresponding to Item 8) and "realistic scenarios" in conversation simulation (Item 7) indicates the application provided sufficient content diversity and authenticity to maintain engagement and prepare learners for genuine communication situations.

Participant 3, who showed particular appreciation for Items 6 and 8 in the questionnaire, explained their feature preferences during the interview: *"The pronunciation training is fantastic—it really helps me sound more natural and confident when speaking. The oral practice sessions are well-structured and build my skills progressively".*

This participant's focus on sounding "more natural and confident" provides deeper context for their strong agreement with Item 6, revealing learning goals that extended beyond mechanical accuracy to encompass authenticity and self-assurance. The combination of naturalness and confidence as desired outcomes suggests the application successfully addressed both linguistic and affective dimensions of speaking skill development, which research indicates are often interconnected in successful second language communication (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017).

The characterization of pronunciation training as "fantastic" and its connection to natural-sounding speech indicates the application's phonetic instruction addressed prosodic and intonational features beyond segmental accuracy. For Indonesian learners, whose first language has different stress patterns and intonational contours than English, this focus on naturalness represents sophisticated pedagogical design that recognizes the importance of suprasegmental features in intelligible, authentic-sounding speech.

The explicit appreciation for "well-structured" oral practice sessions that "build skills progressively" directly explains this participant's strong agreement with Item 8, revealing that clear learning progressions and systematic scaffolding were particularly valued. This emphasis on structure suggests the participant benefited from understanding how individual practice activities contributed to overall communicative competence, allowing them to track development and maintain motivation through visible progress.

The integration of questionnaire and interview data reveals that while pronunciation training and immediate feedback received the highest overall ratings, participants valued different features based on their specific learning goals, preferences, and developmental stages. The 94.4% positive rating for pronunciation training (Item 6) reflects broad recognition of its

fundamental importance, while the variation in which other features participants emphasized during interviews demonstrates how the application's multiple affordances supported diverse learning approaches. The high ratings for all features (Items 6-10 all receiving 88-95% positive responses) combined with interview elaborations suggest that Falou's effectiveness derived not from any single feature but from the integrated availability of complementary tools that learners could selectively engage based on individual needs.

3. **Challenges Faced in Using Falou Application**

Item	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Technical problems interfere with learning	11.1%	38.9%	27.8%	22.2%	0%
2	Audio quality is consistently good	0%	22.2%	16.7%	44.4%	16.7%
3	Offline access is available when needed	0%	5.6%	11.1%	38.9%	44.4%
4	Voice recognition accurately understands pronunciation	5.6%	33.3%	27.8%	27.8%	5.5%
15	Network connectivity issues affect learning	16.7%	44.4%	22.2%	16.7%	0%

The questionnaire data revealed significant technical challenges that moderated otherwise positive perceptions of the application. Notably, 61.1% of participants reported that network connectivity issues affected their learning (Item 15), while 83.3% indicated that offline access was inadequate or unavailable (Item 13 - disagree/strongly disagree). Audio quality concerns were reported by 61.1% (Item 12 - disagree/strongly disagree), and voice recognition accuracy received mixed ratings with only 38.9% agreeing it accurately understood pronunciation (Item 14). These quantitative patterns were substantiated and contextualized through interview narratives that revealed how participants experienced, adapted to, and worked around these technical limitations.

Participant 1, whose questionnaire responses indicated moderate technical difficulties (agreeing with Item 11 but not strongly, neutral on Item 14), demonstrated problem-solving capacity during the interview: *"I do face some audio quality issues occasionally, but they have moderate impact and are still manageable. The technical problems don't significantly interfere with my learning experience. I've learned to adjust the settings and found workarounds that help me continue practicing effectively".*

This participant's characterization of audio quality issues as "manageable" provides context for their questionnaire pattern of acknowledging technical problems (Item 11) while not rating them as severely interfering with learning. The emphasis on finding "workarounds" and learning to "adjust the settings" explains how they maintained high satisfaction levels (reflected in Section 1 ratings) despite experiencing the technical difficulties indicated in their responses to Items 11-15.

The participant's resilience and adaptive behavior reveal important individual variation in how technical

challenges impact overall learning experiences. For users with higher technological literacy or greater problem-solving capacity, technical limitations represent surmountable obstacles rather than insurmountable barriers. This finding suggests that application effectiveness depends not only on technical performance but also on users' capacity to troubleshoot and optimize their learning environment.

The availability of adjustable settings that this participant mentioned indicates that the application provided some customization capabilities that enabled users to compensate for technical limitations. However, the necessity of these workarounds also highlights that optimal performance was not achieved "out of the box," requiring user intervention to maintain functionality—a potential barrier for less technologically proficient learners.

Participant 2, whose questionnaire responses showed stronger agreement with connectivity-related problems (Items 11, 15) and more critical ratings of voice recognition (Item 14), elaborated on specific technical challenges during the interview: *"I sometimes have network connectivity issues and occasional voice recognition delays, which moderately impact my practice sessions".*

The specific identification of "network connectivity issues" and "voice recognition delays" as distinct problems provides deeper understanding of this participant's questionnaire responses, particularly their agreement that technical problems interfered with learning (Item 11) and that network connectivity affected learning (Item 15). These challenges directly impacted the interactive features that other participants valued most highly, potentially explaining why this participant's overall satisfaction (Section 1) was somewhat lower than Participant 1's.

The mention of "voice recognition delays" contextualizes this participant's neutral to negative ratings on Item 14 regarding voice recognition accuracy. These delays likely disrupted the natural flow of practice sessions and reduced the effectiveness of immediate feedback mechanisms that Participant 1 found so valuable. For speaking practice, where natural rhythm and timing are important components of communicative competence, recognition delays could significantly impact the authenticity and utility of practice experiences.

The characterization of these issues as having "moderate impact" suggests that while they created obstacles, they were not severe enough to prevent continued use. However, the specific mention of impact on "practice sessions" indicates that technical problems were most noticeable during active feature engagement rather than passive content consumption, highlighting the particular vulnerability of interactive components to technical limitations. This pattern emphasizes that applications relying heavily on real-time interaction and feedback require more robust technical infrastructure than content-delivery applications.

Participant 3, whose questionnaire responses indicated strong disagreement with offline access availability (Item 13) and concerns about audio quality consistency (Item 12), detailed specific accessibility barriers during the interview: *"The main challenges I encounter are occasional audio quality fluctuations and limited offline access when my internet is unstable. These moderately impact my practice accessibility".*

This participant's focus on "practice accessibility" rather than practice quality reveals how technical challenges created barriers to consistent engagement rather than just degraded user experience during sessions. The emphasis on accessibility aligns directly with their strong disagreement

on Item 13 regarding offline access, indicating that internet dependency prevented the consistent practice schedules crucial for language skill development.

The identification of "audio quality fluctuations" as a primary concern contextualizes this participant's negative ratings on Item 12, revealing that inconsistent rather than uniformly poor performance was the central issue. Fluctuating quality likely impacted both the clarity of model pronunciations and the accuracy of speech recognition feedback, potentially undermining the pronunciation training features that all participants valued (Section 2, Item 6). This variability created uncertainty about whether errors in recognition reflected actual pronunciation problems or technical limitations, potentially reducing the pedagogical value of feedback provided.

The specific mention that challenges impact accessibility "when my internet is unstable" highlights the application's dependence on reliable connectivity for core functionality. This limitation represents a substantial barrier in contexts with inconsistent internet infrastructure, preventing users from maintaining regular learning schedules even when motivated to practice. The participant's acknowledgment that these challenges "moderately impact" accessibility suggests they successfully adapted through strategic timing of practice sessions when connectivity was more reliable, but this adaptation likely reduced overall practice frequency and consistency.

The integration of questionnaire and interview data reveals that technical challenges represented significant but variably impactful barriers to optimal application utilization. While 50% of participants reported technical problems interfering with learning (Items 11, 15 - agree/strongly agree), interview narratives demonstrated that impact severity depended heavily on individual factors including technological literacy, problem-solving capacity, adaptation strategies, and local infrastructure quality. The particularly low ratings for offline access (Item 13 - only 5.6% agree) and audio quality consistency (Item 12 - only 22.2% agree) indicate that these represented the most widespread and problematic technical limitations, affecting users regardless of their adaptive capacity. These findings highlight that successful mobile language learning implementation in developing country contexts requires not only pedagogically sound features but also robust technical infrastructure, comprehensive offline capabilities, and user support systems that help learners navigate and overcome technical challenges.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal both promising opportunities and significant challenges in using the Falou application for English speaking skill development. The predominantly positive student perceptions align with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of mobile applications in language learning (Yang & Zou, 2020) Research by Harahap and Salmiah (2024) on the "Ispeak" application similarly found that mobile speaking applications significantly improved students' speaking competencies, particularly in pronunciation accuracy and speaking fluency, which corroborates the positive outcomes observed in this study. The enthusiastic responses from participants, particularly regarding confidence gains and sustained motivation, support research by Stockwell (2021) on mobile learning autonomy and Kukulska-Hulme and Viberg (2018) on accessibility advantages. The immediate feedback mechanism emerged as a particularly valued feature, confirming findings by Lee and Park (2020) that real-time corrective feedback significantly enhances learning outcomes compared to delayed feedback systems.

The confidence-building aspect reflects what MacIntyre and Vincze (2017)

describe as developing "willingness to communicate" in second language contexts. Research by Zhang and Zou (2022) found that non-judgmental digital environments significantly reduced speaking anxiety among Asian learners, which is particularly relevant given that speaking anxiety is a primary barrier for Indonesian English learners (Anandari, 2015; Fitriani et al., 2015). The consistent appreciation for pronunciation training supports extensive research on mobile pronunciation instruction (Thomson & Derwing, 2015; Liu & Wang, 2022), while positive evaluations of conversation simulation features align with both Fryer et al. (2020) and Harahap and Salmiah (2024), who found that interactive speaking features in mobile applications effectively bridge the gap between controlled exercises and authentic communication. The similarity between Falou and Ispeak applications in providing structured speaking practice demonstrates the growing effectiveness of mobile-assisted speaking skill development tools in Indonesian educational contexts.

However, the limited effectiveness of basic features alone supports research by Kessler (2018) emphasizing that successful applications must provide comprehensive, integrated skill development rather than isolated exercises. The technical challenges encountered reflect broader mobile learning implementation issues identified by Nikolopoulou et al. (2021) in developing countries, where audio quality problems, connectivity issues, and voice recognition difficulties highlight infrastructure barriers that constitute fundamental obstacles to equitable access. The voice recognition problems align with research by Liakin et al. (2015) and Kacetl and Klímová (2019), who found that many commercial applications are optimized for native speaker patterns and may inadequately accommodate non-native speaker accents. Interestingly, while Harahap and Salmiah (2024) reported fewer technical difficulties with the Ispeak application, the challenges identified in this study with Falou

suggest that technical performance may vary significantly across different mobile speaking applications and user contexts.

The variation in participant responses supports Benson's (2021) description of complex interactions between individual learner characteristics, technological affordances, and contextual factors in autonomous learning. These findings extend Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) understanding by demonstrating how perceived usefulness and ease of use are mediated by infrastructure reliability and adaptation processes in developing country contexts. The limited offline access capabilities highlight concerns raised by Ally and Prieto-Blázquez (2014) about cloud-dependent educational technologies in resource-constrained environments.

This study demonstrates that successful mobile language learning implementation requires a holistic approach addressing technological infrastructure, pedagogical design, user support, and individual learning needs simultaneously. Applications intended for developing country contexts must prioritize offline functionality and robust performance under suboptimal conditions while providing comprehensive user onboarding and technical support to ensure maximum learning effectiveness. The comparative success of applications like Ispeak (Harahap & Salmiah, 2024) and the mixed results with Falou suggest that careful attention to technical optimization and user experience design is crucial for mobile speaking applications to achieve their pedagogical potential in Indonesian educational settings.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the Falou application has promising potential in helping English Department students at Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara improve their English speaking skills, with 88.9% of participants reporting positive perceptions toward its effectiveness. The most effective features identified through

questionnaire and interview data include pronunciation training with immediate feedback (94.4% positive rating), progressively structured oral practice sessions (88.9%), conversation simulations with realistic scenarios (88.9%), and comprehensive speaking assessments (77.8%). These features successfully build learner confidence and provide a supportive learning environment for practicing speaking without fear of making mistakes, addressing key challenges faced by Indonesian EFL learners such as speaking anxiety and limited authentic practice opportunities. The findings align with Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) theory, particularly regarding learner autonomy and the affordances of mobile technologies for situated, personalized language practice.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the Falou application faces significant technical challenges that can hinder optimal learning experiences in the Indonesian context. Network connectivity issues affected 61.1% of participants, audio quality concerns were reported by 61.1%, voice recognition accuracy received mixed evaluations (only 38.9% positive), and severely limited offline access capabilities were noted by 83.3% of participants (with only 5.6% finding it adequate). These challenges reflect broader technological infrastructure issues in developing countries and indicate that successful mobile-based language learning requires a holistic approach simultaneously addressing technological infrastructure, pedagogical design, and user support aspects. To maximize the potential of applications like Falou, developers need to prioritize robust offline functionality and performance optimization under suboptimal technical conditions, while educators and institutions must provide comprehensive user support and technical literacy training to ensure maximum learning effectiveness in Indonesian educational contexts.

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