Investigating EFL Students' Perception to Speaking Performance: A Learning Experience through Hallo Application

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Abstract

The Hallo application, a mobile platform designed to enhance speaking skills by enabling users to connect with English speakers worldwide, has recently garnered significant attention among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. This study aimed to explore EFL students' perceptions of using the Hallo application to improve their speaking performance. The research involved 15 participants from the Foreign Language Academy at Universitas Muslim Indonesia, all of whom were EFL students. A qualitative research approach was adopted, utilizing questionnaires and interviews as the primary data collection methods. The findings indicate that the students generally perceive the Hallo application as an effective tool for improving their speaking, listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation skills. They reported that the platform creates a relaxed, pressure-free environment that fosters language learning, which may contribute to greater engagement and motivation. However, the study also revealed several challenges, including the presence of excessive advertisements and encounters with inappropriate users, which could potentially hinder the overall learning experience. Based on the findings, the EFL students demonstrated a positive attitude toward the Hallo application and recognized its potential for enhancing their English-speaking performance. These results suggest that mobile applications like Hallo could be valuable tools for language learning, particularly in fostering communication practice in authentic contexts. For future research, it would be useful to explore how the integration of such applications can be further optimized to minimize user-related challenges, such as inappropriate interactions and disruptive advertisements. Additionally, investigating the long-term impact of using the Hallo application on speaking proficiency would provide more insights into its effectiveness and potential improvements.

Keywords: Speaking performance; Hallo application; Language learning; English proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as one of the primary means of communication in human interactions. Through language, people convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas, making it a critical tool for social interaction and information exchange (Kurniawan, 2024; Karim et al., 2023). In today's globalized world, English has emerged as a dominant language, spoken by more than 1.34 billion people either as their first or second language. As a result, English proficiency has become a vital skill, especially for those seeking to engage in international business, education, and social settings. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering the skill of speaking is often seen as one of the most challenging yet essential aspects of language acquisition (Nasution & Tambunan, 2022; Daflizar, 2024). Speaking requires not only knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also the ability to communicate fluently and confidently. For students in Indonesia, where English is taught as a foreign language, speaking often

presents challenges related to limited exposure, lack of confidence, and minimal opportunities to practice with native speakers.With the advancement of technology, learning English has become more accessible through various digital platforms. Applications and social media now offer students interactive ways to practice their language skills. One such application that has gained attention among EFL learners is the Hallo application, a mobile platform designed to enhance speaking skills by allowing users to connect with other English speakers around the world.

The Hallo application provides EFL learners with an opportunity to practice speaking in real-time through voice calls with native or fluent speakers. This interaction helps students improve their pronunciation, listening comprehension, and fluency while gaining confidence in using English in various contexts (Kurniawan, 2024; Li & Tang, 2018). The application's convenience—being accessible anytime and anywhere—makes it a practical tool for students who may not have regular access to English-speaking environments. Despite the advantages, using online platforms like the Hallo application is not without its challenges. Some students encounter technical issues such as poor internet connectivity or the presence of advertisements during conversations, which can disrupt the learning experience. Additionally, not all users of the application may have appropriate behavior, and students must navigate interactions carefully to ensure a positive learning experience (Saliminan-rizi & Yazdani, 2022; Kinasih & Olivia, 2022). This study seeks to explore the perceptions of EFL students regarding their use of the Hallo application to improve their speaking performance. Specifically, it aims to understand how the application impacts their speaking, listening, and vocabulary skills. The research also examines the challenges that students face while using the Hallo application and how these challenges may affect their overall learning outcomes.

The research is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where English is often seen as an academic requirement rather than a practical communication skill. By investigating students' experiences with the Hallo application, this study hopes to provide insights into how digital platforms can enhance language learning in contexts where direct exposure to English speakers is limited.Furthermore, the study also explores the role of motivation in learning through digital platforms. With the Hallo application offering an unstressed and enjoyable environment for practicing English, it is important to understand how such platforms influence students' attitudes towards language learning. For students who may find classroom settings too formal or intimidating, digital applications may offer a more engaging and comfortable alternative for language practice.By focusing on students from the Foreign Language Academy at Universitas Muslim Indonesia, this research highlights the potential of digital tools in enhancing language proficiency. The findings from this study could provide valuable recommendations for educators, students, and developers of language learning applications on how to optimize the use of digital platforms for speaking practice.In conclusion, as technology continues to play a larger role in education, it is crucial to assess the effectiveness of digital platforms like the Hallo application in fostering language skills. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on language learning through technology by offering insights into how EFL students perceive and experience speaking practice in an online environment.

Review of Literature

The process of mastering a foreign language, particularly English as a Foreign Language (EFL), has been a subject of extensive research over the years. Speaking is one of the most complex and important skills for language learners to acquire. It requires the integration of several linguistic elements such as grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency, all of which are vital for effective communication. Scholars such as Harmer

(2007) and Brown (2001) emphasize the importance of speaking as a primary mode of interaction, stating that it reflects a learner's overall language competence.Various studies have been conducted to explore methods of improving speaking performance among EFL learners. One prominent area of research has focused on the role of technology in enhancing speaking skills. Digital tools, applications, and online platforms provide learners with opportunities to practice speaking in more flexible and interactive environments. For example, according to Nunan (2003), technology offers an immersive experience that can enhance students' linguistic abilities through regular practice and exposure to the target language, making it an integral part of modern language teaching.

The emergence of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications has revolutionized the way EFL learners practice their speaking skills. Applications like Duolingo, Hello English, and Hallo provide platforms where students can engage in real-time conversations, access listening exercises, and improve their vocabulary. These applications also offer learners a chance to practice speaking outside the traditional classroom environment, which is often constrained by time, curriculum, and limited interaction with native speakers. According to Sharma (2019), the flexibility and accessibility of such platforms make them ideal for continuous language learning.Focusing on the Hallo application, it serves as an example of how technology can be used to address the challenges EFL learners face in practicing speaking. The application provides learners with the opportunity to engage in live voice conversations with speakers from various countries. This aligns with the findings of Yuanita (2019), who explored the use of digital tools in teaching speaking and found that online applications can foster active engagement and motivation among learners. Hallo, with its emphasis on real-time interaction, further supports the development of communication skills by allowing learners to practice speaking in an unstressed environment.

Several studies have highlighted the positive effects of such platforms on learners' speaking performance. For instance, Nisa (2022) examined the use of the Ome TV application for speaking practice and found that students who engaged in frequent conversations via the platform showed significant improvements in fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Similar to Hallo, Ome TV provided students with real-time interactions that created a more authentic speaking experience compared to classroom activities. This demonstrates the growing importance of digital platforms in language learning, particularly for students who may not have access to native English speakers.Despite these advantages, there are also challenges associated with using digital platforms for language learning. Issues such as connectivity problems, the presence of inappropriate users, and advertisements can detract from the learning experience. Yuanita (2019) noted that while applications like Hallo provide an engaging environment, the presence of distractions such as advertisements can disrupt the flow of conversations and reduce their effectiveness. Similarly, Nisa (2022) found that students sometimes struggled to find reliable speaking partners, which limited their ability to fully benefit from the application.

Another area of concern is the reliance on digital platforms to replace face-to-face interactions. While these applications offer convenient ways to practice speaking, they may not fully replicate the nuances of in-person communication, such as body language and facial expressions. As McDonough & Mackey (2000) argue, speaking is not just about verbal communication but also about non-verbal cues, which can be harder to interpret through digital platforms. However, despite these limitations, the overall consensus among researchers is that digital tools provide valuable support for EFL learners, especially in contexts where in-person interaction with native speakers is limited.In summary, the literature underscores the potential of digital applications like

Hallo to significantly enhance EFL learners' speaking skills. These platforms provide flexible, accessible, and engaging environments for students to practice real-time communication, build confidence, and improve their overall language competence. However, it is also essential to acknowledge the challenges and limitations associated with their use. Future research could focus on addressing these challenges and further optimizing digital platforms for language learning.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore EFL students' perceptions of using the Hallo application to improve their speaking performance. Qualitative research is particularly suited for studies that seek to understand individuals' subjective experiences and the meaning they attach to those experiences. As Creswell (2012) notes, qualitative research aims to explore a phenomenon in depth, allowing researchers to gather detailed insights into participants' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors. In this case, the study aimed to capture the students' experiences in using the Hallo application as a language learning tool.The research utilized a case study design, which is a common approach in qualitative research when the objective is to explore an individual or group within a specific context. Case studies allow for an in-depth examination of the subject matter, making them ideal for investigating students' perceptions of their speaking performance. The target population for this study was students from the Foreign Language Academy at Universitas Muslim Indonesia, specifically those in their sixth semester who had experience using the Hallo application for speaking practice.A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants for the study. In purposive sampling, researchers deliberately select individuals who are expected to provide rich and relevant information related to the research objectives. In this study, 15 students who had actively used the Hallo application for language learning were selected to participate. These students were chosen based on their familiarity with the application and their willingness to share their experiences and perceptions.

Instruments and Data Collection Technique

Data for the research were collected through two primary methods: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was designed using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," to assess students' perceptions of various aspects of using the Hallo application. The questionnaire consisted of 14 items covering topics such as the advantages of the application, its impact on speaking performance, and challenges encountered during its use. The questionnaire was distributed to all 15 participants via an online form.In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 out of the 15 participants to gain more detailed insights into their experiences. The interviews allowed for follow-up questions based on participants' responses, providing a deeper understanding of the challenges and benefits they encountered when using the Hallo application. The semi-structured nature of the interviews ensured that key themes were explored while also allowing participants to freely express their thoughts.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency and percentage, to summarize students' responses. These results were then interpreted to identify common patterns and trends in students' perceptions of the Hallo application. Meanwhile, the data from the interviews were

analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). Thematic analysis involves coding the data to identify recurring themes and categories, which were then used to answer the research questions.To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, triangulation was used. This involved cross-checking the data collected from the questionnaires and interviews to confirm that the results were consistent. Triangulation helps to enhance the reliability of qualitative research by ensuring that the findings are supported by multiple data sources. In this study, both the questionnaire results and the interview data were compared to identify any discrepancies or reinforcing patterns.In conclusion, the research method adopted in this study allowed for a comprehensive exploration of students' perceptions of the Hallo application. By combining questionnaires with semi-structured interviews, the study was able to capture both quantitative data and detailed qualitative insights. The combination of these methods provided a robust understanding of the impact of the Hallo application on students' speaking performance, as well as the challenges they encountered during its use.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings from the study based on data collected from both questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The results are discussed in relation to the research objectives, which focused on understanding EFL students' perceptions of using the Hallo application to improve speaking performance, as well as the challenges and benefits they experienced while using the platform. The primary research objective aimed to explore how the Hallo application influences students' speaking performance. Questionnaire responses indicated that 80% of participants felt the application significantly improved their self-confidence in speaking English. This was further supported by the interview data, where many students emphasized that Hallo provided a stress-free environment for practicing English. It is inline with Karim et al. (2023) and Salimian_Rizi and Yazdani (2022) who informed that using the app allowed them to engage in real-world conversations without the pressure typically felt in traditional classroom settings. One student shared, "Using Hallo helped me speak more confidently because I could practice with other learners without feeling judged." This highlights the crucial role the Hallo application plays in fostering a non-threatening environment that encourages language practice.

In addition to boosting self-confidence, the study revealed that the Hallo application had a positive impact on other key language skills, such as listening, vocabulary, and pronunciation. According to the questionnaire results, 73.3% of students strongly agreed that the app helped expand their vocabulary, while 66.7% reported an improvement in pronunciation. These findings were corroborated by the interview data, with one participant stating, "Before using Hallo, I struggled with pronunciation, but now I feel more comfortable pronouncing difficult words because I practice regularly with native speakers." The study also found that the Hallo application helped improve listening skills. A total of 53.3% of students agreed that their listening comprehension had improved through engagement in real-time conversations with users from different countries. This exposure to a variety of English accents and conversational styles enhanced their listening ability. One participant noted, "Listening to different accents was challenging at first, but it has helped me understand spoken English better, even in fast conversations." These results confirmed that regular exposure to diverse speech patterns contributes significantly to the development of listening skills (Maharani & Afifi, 2024; Dinesh, 2023).

Despite these positive findings, the study also identified several challenges faced by students when using the Hallo application. The most frequently reported issue was the disruption caused by advertisements during conversations, with 40% of participants noting that these ads often interrupted the flow of communication. One student commented, "The ads are really annoying. Sometimes they pop up when I'm in the middle of an important discussion, and it makes it hard to concentrate." Another challenge, mentioned by 26.7% of students, was encountering inappropriate users who were not serious about practicing English or who engaged in unprofessional behavior. Despite the app's reporting features, these experiences detracted from the overall effectiveness of the platform. One participant remarked, "There are some users who just waste time and aren't interested in learning. It would be better if Hallo had a stricter monitoring system." These challenges underscore the need for improvements in the app's user management and ad placement.

However, the overall perception of the Hallo application remained largely positive. The majority of participants agreed that the app provides a stress-free and enjoyable environment for practicing English. Students expressed satisfaction in using the platform to interact with people from different cultures, which they found both educational and engaging. One participant stated, "Hallo makes learning fun because you're not just practicing English, but also learning about other cultures." This suggests that, in addition to improving language skills, the app also enhances cultural awareness, contributing to a more holistic learning experience (Kurniawan, 2024; Agustina, Thamrin, & Oktoma, 2023).

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, such as Nisa (2022), who found that real-time communication platforms like Ome TV can significantly improve speaking performance. Similar to Hallo, these platforms offer students an interactive and immersive experience that is often absent in traditional classroom settings. By engaging with real-world users, students feel more motivated to practice speaking, leading to increased confidence and improved language skills. Furthermore, the study reinforces the importance of motivation in language learning. Many participants noted that the informal and engaging nature of the Hallo application encouraged them to practice English more frequently. This aligns with Harmer's (2007) assertion that creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment is crucial for language acquisition, especially for skills like speaking that require active participation and confidence.

In conclusion, the Hallo application has proven to be an effective tool for improving EFL students' speaking performance, as well as their listening skills, vocabulary, and pronunciation. While challenges related to advertisements and inappropriate users were noted, the overall benefits of using the application outweighed these issues. The findings suggest that digital platforms like Hallo provide valuable support for language learners, particularly in contexts where access to native speakers is limited (Kurniawan, 2024; Li & Tang, 2018). The study highlights the app's role in fostering a low-pressure, engaging environment that promotes language practice and encourages consistent use.

The implications for future research include examining the long-term effects of using the Hallo application on speaking proficiency and language acquisition. Further studies could also explore ways to optimize the app's design to address challenges such as user distraction and improve the quality of interactions. Enhancing the app's user monitoring system could reduce the incidence of inappropriate users, thus ensuring a more productive and focused learning experience. Overall, this study emphasizes the potential of mobile applications like Hallo to support language learners in their journey

to develop speaking skills, especially when traditional methods may not offer the same level of flexibility and engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceptions of EFL students regarding their use of the Hallo application to improve their speaking performance. The findings indicate that the application has a positive impact on students' language skills, particularly in building confidence and improving speaking fluency, listening comprehension, vocabulary, and pronunciation. By providing a platform for real-time interaction with speakers from various countries, the Hallo application helps students practice English in a relaxed and enjoyable environment outside of the traditional classroom.One of the key benefits identified in the study is the ability of the Hallo application to create a stress-free and motivating learning experience. Many students reported feeling more confident in their speaking abilities after using the application, which suggests that digital platforms like Hallo can effectively complement formal language education. Additionally, the application's accessibility allows students to practice English anytime and anywhere, which is especially important for those with limited exposure to native speakers in their daily lives.

Despite these advantages, the study also uncovered several challenges associated with using the Hallo application. Issues such as disruptive advertisements and the presence of inappropriate users were commonly cited by students as obstacles that affected their learning experience. While these challenges did not significantly diminish the overall positive perception of the application, addressing them could enhance the user experience and make the platform more conducive to language learning.The results of this study are consistent with previous research that highlights the role of technology in enhancing language learning. Applications like Hallo offer students opportunities to practice real-world communication in a way that is flexible and engaging. However, it is crucial for developers to continue improving the platform by minimizing distractions and ensuring a safe learning environment for all users.In conclusion, the Hallo application presents a valuable resource for EFL learners seeking to improve their speaking performance and other language skills. While there are areas that need improvement, the overall effectiveness of the application in fostering language development is clear. Future research could explore more specific strategies to address the challenges identified, as well as investigate the long-term impact of using such digital platforms on language proficiency.

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