

DIGITAL REPETITION, REAL CONVERSATION: ENHANCING SPEAKING ABILITY VIA THE CAKE APP

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Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of the Cake application in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' speaking abilities through a mixed-methods approach. A quasi-experimental design was used for the quantitative component, involving 60 high school students in Indonesia divided into experimental and control groups. Quantitative data were collected through pre- and post-tests measuring fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. To complement these findings, qualitative data were obtained from interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and classroom observations to gain deeper insights into students' learning experiences and attitudes. Results revealed that the experimental group showed significantly higher gains in speaking performance, attributed to the app's repetition-based practice and authentic exposure to spoken English. Students also expressed increased motivation, confidence, and enjoyment in learning. These findings suggest that integrating mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) tools like the Cake app can enrich traditional EFL instruction by supporting both skill development and learner engagement.

Keywords: *Cake app, Digital repetition, Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), Speaking skill, EFL*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most vital yet challenging skills for EFL learners to master. Unlike reading or writing, speaking requires spontaneous use of language, encompassing pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar (Goh & Burns, 2012). Traditional classroom instruction often falls short in providing sufficient real-life exposure and repeated practice that learners need to develop speaking competence.

In recent years, mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has emerged as a promising approach to supplement in-class instruction. Language learning applications offer learners interactive, flexible, and personalized ways to improve their language skills. One of these applications is Cake, a free, user-friendly app designed to support speaking practice through short

video clips, pronunciation drills, and real-time speech recognition.

Several studies have highlighted the growing relevance of MALL in improving speaking skills. For instance, Putra et al. (2021) reported that the use of mobile applications significantly increased students' speaking fluency and engagement. Similarly, Sari and Hadi (2023) found that mobile apps such as Cake provide learners with immediate feedback, increased exposure to native English, and greater confidence in oral communication. Nurmalasari and Ardi (2021) conducted a qualitative study on the Cake app, revealing that students enjoyed using the app and felt it helped them with pronunciation and everyday expressions. Wijaya (2022) also found that repetition-based apps such as Cake enhance learners' ability to mimic native speech patterns effectively.

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While these studies provide useful insights into the benefits of mobile apps in language learning, many are limited to perceptual or qualitative data without robust experimental design. Few studies combine both quantitative evidence of speaking improvement and qualitative accounts of learner experience within the same research framework. Moreover, in the Indonesian EFL context, empirical research specifically examining the Cake app's impact through a structured classroom intervention remains scarce.

This study aims to fill that gap by integrating a quasi-experimental approach with qualitative insights to explore the effects of the Cake application on students' speaking ability. The novelty of this study lies in the use of digital repetition via the Cake app as a structured and guided classroom tool, measuring both performance outcomes and learner perceptions. The study seeks to answer: (1) To what extent does the Cake app improve speaking proficiency? and (2) How do students perceive their speaking development using the app?

The novelty of this study lies in the integration of digital repetition with authentic speaking practice in a structured school setting. This research not only evaluates speaking performance quantitatively but also explores student experiences to provide pedagogical insights for EFL teachers.

METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach using a quasi-experimental design for the quantitative component and qualitative techniques such as interviews, observations, and open-ended questionnaires. The quasi-experimental design allowed for comparison between a control and an experimental group to

measure the impact of the Cake application on students' speaking abilities. The mixed-methods approach provided a richer understanding by combining statistical analysis of speaking performance with students' perceptions and experiences.

B. Participants

Sixty tenth-grade students from a senior high school in East Java were selected through purposive sampling. The students were divided into two groups: experimental ($n = 30$) and control ($n = 30$). All participants had similar English proficiency levels based on their mid-semester scores.

C. Instruments

- 1) Speaking Test: Developed based on CEFR criteria to assess fluency, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.
- 2) Interview Guide: Open-ended questions to explore student perceptions and experiences.
- 3) Observation Checklist: Used to document class participation, engagement, and use of the Cake app.

D. Procedure

- 1) Week 1: Pre-test for both groups using the speaking rubric.
- 2) Weeks 2–6: The experimental group used the Cake app for 15 minutes daily during school hours, guided by the teacher. The control group received traditional speaking instruction based on the textbook.
- 3) Week 7: Post-test and student interviews were conducted.

E. Data Analysis

Quantitative data from pre- and post-tests were analyzed using SPSS. Paired sample t-tests compared within-group progress, and independent t-tests compared between-group differences. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Comparison of speaking skills scores

Component	Control Group Pre-Test	Control Group Post-Test	Experimental Group Pre-Test	Experimental Group Post-Test
Fluency	15.1	18.7	15.3	22.7
Pronunciation	14.8	17.9	14.6	21.4
Vocabulary	15.5	18.3	15.0	21.2
Grammar	16.7	19.9	16.9	22.8
Total	62.1	68.4	61.8	82.3

As illustrated in Table 1, each component of speaking—fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar—showed more substantial improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group. Fluency, for instance, increased by 7.4 points in the experimental group, while the control group saw only a 3.6-point increase. Similarly, gains in pronunciation (6.8 vs. 3.1), vocabulary (6.2 vs. 2.8), and grammar (5.9 vs. 3.2) further underscore the effectiveness of the Cake app.

A. Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended questionnaire responses provided deeper insights into the experiences of students using the Cake app. Analysis revealed five recurring themes: improved pronunciation and intonation, increased confidence, flexibility in learning, exposure to real-life English, and motivation through gamified learning. Below is an expanded explanation of each theme supported by multiple student quotes.

1) Improved Pronunciation and Intonation

Nearly all students reported that repeated listening and speaking exercises in the Cake app improved their pronunciation. The app's model of native speakers, paired with voice recognition feedback, enabled students to refine their pronunciation independently.

"At first, I was shy because my pronunciation was bad. But repeating after the video helped me pronounce better."

"The app helps me say the words more clearly. I always imitate the way the actor or actress speaks."

"When I recorded my voice, I compared it with the original, and I tried again until it sounded similar."

2) Increased Confidence in Speaking

Many students expressed that they felt less anxiety speaking English when using the app. The opportunity to practice in private before speaking in class led to increased confidence.

"I practiced many times. The app never judged me, so I became more confident."

"I am not afraid of making mistakes anymore because the app lets me try again and again."

"Before, I didn't like speaking in front of my classmates. Now I feel more ready to try."

3) Flexibility and Motivation to Learn Anytime

The convenience of mobile learning allowed students to engage with English in various settings beyond the classroom. This flexibility increased the frequency of their speaking practice.

"Using Cake is fun. I can study at home, in the car, anytime."

"Sometimes I learn after dinner or before I sleep. It's not boring like usual homework."

"I use the app while waiting for my parents. It's better than just scrolling social media."

4) Real-Life Language Exposure

Students found value in watching real video clips with natural speech patterns. The use of popular media made English feel more accessible and relevant.

"I love how the videos are from real shows. It's not boring like the textbook."

"I now know how to say things like 'what's up' or 'you've got this'—things I never learned from school."

"The conversations in Cake are real. I want to sound like that when I speak."

5) Encouragement from Repetition and Rewards

Repetition of phrases, along with progress indicators like stars, badges, and daily streaks, helped sustain motivation.

"Repeating the phrases felt like a game. I didn't realize I was learning so much."

"The app reminded me to keep learning every day. It made me feel proud."

"I always tried to get a perfect score in the speaking task. That made me keep going."

These findings highlight how the Cake app's features support the development of speaking skills by providing students with personalized, pressure-free, and enjoyable language practice. The qualitative responses corroborate the quantitative results by showing that learners not only improved in performance but also developed a more positive and proactive attitude toward speaking English.

The integration of the Cake app into EFL instruction aligns with the theory of comprehensible input and output. Students were able to hear natural English, repeat it, and receive feedback. The repetitive nature of the app supported language automatization, particularly in pronunciation and fluency.

Compared with previous research (e.g., Putra et al., 2021; Sari & Hadi, 2023), this study offers experimental evidence that confirms the pedagogical value of mobile applications in EFL contexts. Moreover, it highlights student perceptions that confirm the motivational and affective benefits of app-assisted learning.

CONCLUSIONS

This study provides empirical support for the use of the Cake app to improve EFL students' speaking skills. Quantitative data confirm significant gains in speaking proficiency, while qualitative insights reveal increased learner motivation and confidence. The findings suggest that integrating MALL tools like Cake into classroom instruction can enhance language learning outcomes.

It is recommended that educators incorporate app-based practice to complement classroom activities. Further research could explore long-term retention, the impact on different proficiency levels, or comparative studies across different MALL platforms.

While this study offers valuable findings, it is not without limitations. First, the duration of the intervention was relatively short (four weeks), which may not fully capture the long-term effects of using the Cake app. Second, the study involved only 60 students from a single institution, limiting its generalizability. Third, the speaking assessment was limited to structured tasks and did not include spontaneous conversation scenarios. Finally, while qualitative insights were gathered, only a small number of students were interviewed.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of mobile apps on spontaneous and academic speaking. Researchers are also encouraged to use a larger and more diverse sample and to compare different mobile applications or instructional approaches. Including teacher perspectives and incorporating peer feedback as part of the learning process would also enrich the understanding of technology-assisted language learning.

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