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The Effectiveness of Using RealLife English Application to Improve Students' Speaking Ability at Grade XI of SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of RealLife English application in improving speaking skills in eleventh grade students at SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. It was found that the problems were limited vocabulary, lack of confidence, and inadequate use of interactive media. This study used a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design where the experimental group used RealLife English application and the control group used conventional methods. The study consisted of 75 students randomly selected from two classes: Accounting 2 Class (experimental) and Batik and Textile Creative Craft 1 Class (control). Quantitative data was collected through pre-test and post-test, by analyzing the improvement of speaking ability. The experimental group showed a significant increase in their mean score from 55.55 to 75.55. In contrast, the average score of the control group increased from 41.53 to 58.05. Statistical analysis confirmed that the improvement in the experimental group was significant p -value = 0.000, thus it can be concluded that the alternative hypothesis analysis (H_a) is accepted. These findings indicate that the RealLife English application significantly improved students' speaking ability compared to the conventional method. This research highlights the potential of the application to offer a more engaging and interactive learning experience.

1. Introduction

English has become an international language and one of the languages that is spoken most often worldwide, whether as a primary language or a second language. Most people believe that mastering English is crucial for engaging effectively in modern life. It is extensively employed in various domains such as education, entertainment, sports, and technology (Zuhraxon, 2023). In learning English several essential skills need to be emphasized, namely listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Speaking is one of the important components that must be learned in English, because with speaking people can communicate and interact with each other. According to Syahfutra et al. (2019), speaking is especially

crucial for English language learners, as English is the primary foreign language in Indonesia. Mastery of speaking skills is essential for those learning a second or foreign language, as it significantly enhances their ability to retrieve and comprehend information effectively. According to Bohari (2020), speaking is the ability to orally express opinions, thoughts, facts, and feelings, and is a primary goal in language learning as it enables clear and accurate communication. Speaking also functions as interaction which serves to start conversations, greet each other, make small talk, and share recent experiences in an effort to establish friendships and improve social bonds (Suban, 2021).

Many learners of foreign or second languages focus on learning speaking because it is the skill that is considered learned before all other skills (Nainggolan et al., 2022). The ability to speak is crucial in the process of language acquisition. People communicate through speaking to obtain a lot more information (Keith and Morrow, 1981) in (Indrawati, 2019). It involves fluency, correct sentence structure, and appropriate word choice within specific contexts, reflecting for mastery of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and the ability to understand and engage in conversations (Santi et al., 2020).

Communication abilities are important in modern life, and understanding skills is required for success in a chosen field, for a multitude of reasons, including career growth, confidence building, improved work prospects, public speaking, attending interviews, engaging in debates, and more (Rao, 2019). This process involves developing skills in understanding and using appropriate sentence structures, as well as mastering grammar rules to convey messages clearly and being able to understand information conveyed by others and respond to it effectively. In speaking there are five aspects of speaking ability that are related to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Satriawan & Skolastika, 2023). According to Brown (2003: 141) in Prabowo & Redo (2020), there are five types of speaking or oral production that students are required to engage in in the classroom as follows; Imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive. Indeed, mastering speaking is a prerequisite for effective communication among students (Ani & Sinaga, 2021).

In order to make an effective teaching in speaking skill, a teacher should know the difficulties in speaking. Many students of English as a foreign language encounter more difficulties in speaking. According Franscy & Ramli (2022), revealed that the Indonesian EFL learners encountered difficulties in mastering speaking skills related to both linguistic and non-linguistic factors. According to Wahyuningsih & Afandi (2020), there are a number of factors that make it harder to communicate in English, identified as follows; lack of Appropriate Vocabulary, lack of Grammar Mastery, lack of Correct Pronunciation, lack of English Input outside the class, lack of confidence.

Observations and interviews with the English teacher and students at SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru have identified several issues among grade XI students. First, the students had difficulty communicating in English due to limited vocabulary. Lack of vocabulary is one of the reasons students cannot communicate well, in this case

students are not able to interact with the person they are talking to. Second, the students are lack of confident and felt shy to speak in English. Students' lack of confidence when speaking English can be caused by lots of situations, including: feeling nervous when speaking in front of others, being unsure of how to construct sentences, being afraid of their vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation and feeling embarrassed of their classmates' reactions when they speak English incorrectly. Third, the problem is lack of use of interesting and interactive media.

Choosing the right media can convey information more interactive and varieties, and increase students' involvement in the learning process (Aziz & Dewi, 2020), to address these issues, one potential solution is the use of applications that can make learning more engaging. The use of applications can help students increase their enthusiasm for learning, increase knowledge and make the learning process more enjoyable (Septiani, 2023). RealLife English is one of the applications that can be used by students. They can practice their speaking abilities with this application. According to Ethan & Justin, (2021), RealLife English is an application on May 14, 2021.

It helps users improve their English by connecting them with people globally for conversations and by providing podcasts, flashcards, and practice tools for idioms, phrases, slang, pronunciation, and connective speech. According to Siahaan (2023), The RealLife English application includes a YouTube channel that offers genuine movie clips and material on various English language topics, such as idioms, slang, verb phrases, pronunciation, and cultural context. This resource supports users in enhancing their English fluency and confidence. For conversational practice, the platform allows users to interact with other English learners, with each conversation limited to four minutes.

There are some similar studies that had been conducted before, which show media can improve the students speaking ability. The first research was conducted by (Siahaan, 2023). The purpose of this study was to determine how the independent students exchanged in the English department of Nommensen HKBP University Medan's sixth semester used the RealLife English application to assist in their acquisition of communicative or general speaking English skills. The results of the study showed that students understood communicative English skills effectively, and that using RealLife applications as successful media gave them the confidence and freedom to speak English with others.

The Second research was conducted by (Suryanto & Fitrawan, 2023). The purpose of this study was to look into the advantages of giving students the OmeTV program as a tool to improve their English-speaking skills. In the result findings, there are a number of benefits to using the Ome-TV application to improve English language proficiency among English Language Education Department (ELED) students. The Third research was conducted by (Safitri, 2022). The aim of this research is to determine whether or not the Opentalk application can help tenth grade students at MAN Kendal enhance their speaking abilities in the 2022–2023 school year. The results shows that the use of the Opentalk program was successful in helping students' speaking abilities.

Based on the previous studies, there are some important similarities and differences. In general, all the studies used the application with the same purpose, which is to improve students' speaking skills, however, the significant difference was in the application used, the type of research sample, and the data collection method. The first study used RealLife English with a sample of exchange students in 6th semester using a class room action research approach. The second study used the Ome-Tv application with a sample of English Education Study Program students at an Islamic private university in Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, the third study utilized the Open Talk application and involved eleventh grade students at MAN Kendal. These differences emphasize the importance of selecting the right application and appropriate methodology for the effectiveness of improving students' speaking skills.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out the effectiveness of Realife English application to improve students' speaking ability at grade XI of SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru. The researcher focuses on the third problem which is lack of use interesting and interactive media. It is necessary to limit the problem in this research. The researcher limited the problem in this research to using media, especially the effectiveness of RealLife English application to improve students' speaking ability at grade XI of SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru.

2. Methodology

This research uses quantitative research. According to Sugiono (2013, p. 8), quantitative research methods refers to positivist research techniques that are applied to studying certain populations or samples. Gathering data with the use of research equipment, and analyzing data quantitatively or statistically in order to evaluate assumptions. According to Kandel (2020), quantitative research aims to determine a connection in a population between one item (an independent variable) and another (a dependent or outcome variable).

This research used an approach using experimental research methods in the form of quasi-experimental research. The quasi-experimental design includes a control group, but it cannot fully control other factors variables that affect the experiment's implementation (Sugiono, 2013, p. 77). This research sample used two classes, a control class and an experimental class. Sample is a small part of a population. According to Rahmadi (2011, p. 62), the sample is part or representative of the population. Research uses samples does not examine the entire population but only part of the population that is studied.

The research was conducted on July 18 to August 5, 2024. The technique used in this research is simple random sampling. It is considered simple because the sampling method involves selecting individuals randomly from the population, without taking into account the different strata within it. (Sugiono, 2013, p. 85). In this research, the sampling was conducted using a name wheel to ensure fair participants who fit the research criteria. The result of the selection uses the eleventh-grade students which consist of 75 students as the sample. Two classes

were used in this research, one class for experimental group and another one for control group. The sample are class Accounting 2 and class Batik and Textile Creative Craft 1. According to Campbell & Stanley (1963) in Isnawan (2020), the design for this type of research was as follows:

Table 1. Research Design

Experimental Class	O1	X	O2
Control Class	O3	-	O4

Notes:

X: Treatment

O1: Pre-Test of Experimental Class

O2: Post-Test of Experimental Class

O3: Pre-Test of Control Class

O4: Post-Test of Control Class

Data Collection Method

Data collection methods are the techniques used to gather information for various purposes. According to Sadan (2017), quantitative research data collection is driven by a carefully outlined plan that specifies what data to gather, the duration of data collection, and the methods to be used. For this research, data collection method used was giving speaking tests to students. The test in the form of performing the conversation based on a specific situation. The topic was about the use of asking and giving information expression. The evaluation of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency was determined by the student scores. The researcher measured students' speaking skills using a rubric, which has five components a weighting point system ranging from the lowest to the highest, and a rating range of 1-5. In this research, the researcher adopted a scoring rubric in speaking test from Brown (2004) in Qomariyah (2023). The results of student grades use the following calculations:

$$\text{Score} = \frac{\text{the obtained score}}{\text{Maximum score}} \times 100$$

And based on the results of the calculations above, to know the level of students used the following scores:

Table 2. The Classification of Students Score

No	Criteria	Score
1	Excellent	80-100
2	Good	71-79
3	Average	61-70
4	Fair	51-60
5	Poor	0-50

Source: (Hidayah, 2019)

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection is one of the most crucial steps of a study. The quality of research, whether quantitative or qualitative is heavily influenced by the accuracy and completeness of data acquired by the researcher (Dewi, 2021). In collecting data, the researcher collected data using the following procedures:

a) Pre-Test

In the first meeting, the researcher gave a pre-test to determine or measure the level of students' speaking ability. In testing the level of knowledge and speaking ability of students in English, the researcher gave speaking test to determine students' fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension in speaking.

b) Treatment

After carrying out the pre-test, the next step was to carry out treatment. In this case the researcher gave treatment to the experimental class using RealLife English application, while the control class used the conventional method. Treatment was carried out for 6 times.

c) Post-Test

At the last meeting, the researcher gave a post-test to students to find out whether there was an improvement in students' speaking ability after applying RealLife English application to students.

Data Analysis

Techniques for data analysis are the tools and approaches that are used to draw conclusions and insights from data. According to Bogdan and Tylor (1975) in Nasir & Sukmawatii (2023), data analysis as a process that details formal efforts to identify themes and create concept. After collecting the data, the data was be analyzed by some analysis namely normality testing, homogeneity testing and hypothesis testing.

a. Normality Testing

The normality test is very important to know whether the data is normally distributed (Aljandali, 2016). According to Ghazali (2016), The normality test aims to determine if the values of the independent and dependent variables are normally distributed.

The analyzed could be determined based on the following guidelines were as follows:

- 1) If $p\text{-value (sig.)} > 0,05$ = the data was normal contribution.
 - 2) If $p\text{-value (sig.)} < 0,05$ = the data was not normal contribution
-

b. Homogeneity Testing

The homogeneity test is employed to show that two or more sets of sample data originate from populations with similar variability. This test is applied to the post-test data of both the experimental and control groups (Sugiono, 2013, p. 276).

The data was be analyzed by using IBM SPSS Statistic 25. The analyzed result could be divided based on the following guidelines were as follows:

- 1) If the probability or sig. (based on mean) $> 0,05$, then the data was homogenous.
- 2) If the probability or sig. (based on mean) $< 0,05$, then the data was not homogenous.

c. Hypothesis Testing

Data analysis using hypothesis testing, in this research, the researcher used IBM SPSS Statistics 25 with a paired sample t-test to determine whether the hypothesis was accepted. The hypothesis testing was based on the following guidelines:

- 1) If the probability or sig. $< 0,05$ then the data H_a was accepted.
- 2) If the probability or sig. $> 0,05$ then the data H_a was not accepted

3. Result and Discussion

Result

The research conducted at SMK Negeri 4 Pekanbaru on July 18 to August 5 2024. Two classes were selected: Accounting 2 class as the experimental class and Batik and Textile Creative Craft 1 class as the control class. Data were collected through pre-test, post-test, and six treatment sessions. The experimental group was treated using the RealLife English application, while the control group used conventional teaching methods.

The Results of Students Pre-Test and Post Test Scores

The results of the averages pre-test and post-test scores of the two classes could be seen from the diagram below:

The diagram shown a significant increase in test scores for both classes after the test. The experimental class, which used RealLife English application had a significant increase in mean score from 55.55 in the pre-test to 75.55 in the post-test, marked a difference of 20 points. In contrast, the control class, which relied on conventional methods improved from a pre-test mean score of 41.53 to 58.05 in the post-test, which resulted in a difference of 16.52 points. This comparison showed that the experimental using RealLife English application resulted in a greater increase in scores compared to the conventional method used in the control class.

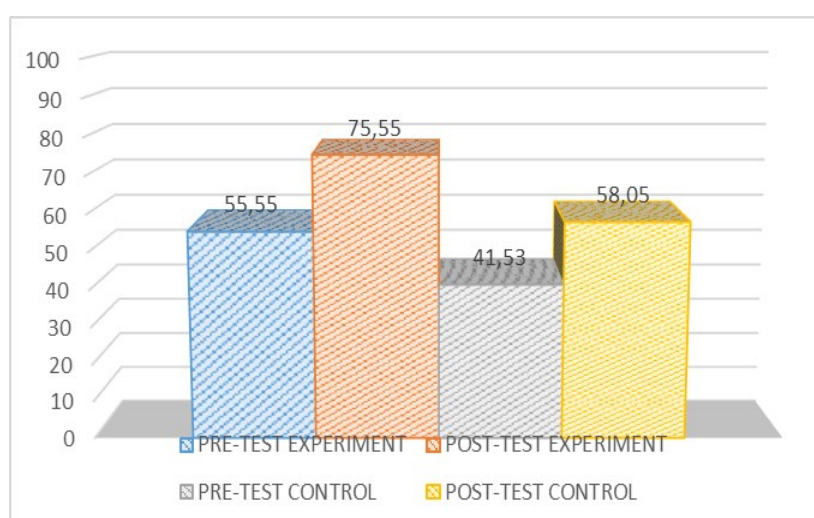


Figure 1. The Mean Score Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Both Classes

The Result of Normality Test

The normality of the test has been carried out to evaluate whether the analyzed data follows a normal distribution or not.

Table 3. Table Test of Normality

		Tests of Normality					
		Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Class	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Speaking Ability	Pre test of accounting class 2	.171	36	.091	.920	36	.187
	Pre test of Batik and textile class 1	.189	39	.106	.913	39	.670
	Post test of accounting class 2	.200	36	.090	.907	36	.897
	Post test of Batik and textile class 1	.197	39	.754	.094	39	.640
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

Based on the results of the data obtained from SPSS 25 in the normality test Kolmogorov-Smirnov, it showed that the significant value of the experimental class pre-test was 0.91, the control class pre-test was 0.106, the experimental class post-test was 0.90, and the control class post-test class was 0.754. Therefore, it could be summarized that the overall data from the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class and control class were normally distributed because the score of each data was greater than 0.05.

The Result of Homogeneity Test

The homogeneity test has been carried out to determine whether the data from the population has the same distribution.

Table 4. Homogeneity Test of Experimental Class and Control Class

		Test of Homogeneity of Variance			
		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Speaking Ability	Based on Mean	2.596	3	146	.060
	Based on Median	2.290	3	146	.081
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.290	3	136.320	.081
	Based on trimmed mean	2.629	3	146	.052

Based on the results of the data above, it showed that the result of the Based on mean of the homogeneity test showed a number of 0.060, the generated data was greater than 0.05, which means that the data was homogeneous.

The Result of Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis test has been carried out using paired sample t-test analysis. The paired sample t-test used to determine whether there was a significant effect on improving students' ability to speak or not. The hypothesis test was conducted using SPSS version 25 whose data was seen from the results of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental class.

Table 5. Table Paired Samples Test

		Paired Samples Test						
		Paired Differences						
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre test of (accounting 2 class) - post test (accounting 2 class)	-20.0000	5.57546	-21.8864	-18.1135	-21.523	35	.000

Based on the table above, it could be observed that the value of t-test (2 tailed) showed 0.00 which was smaller than 0.05 that means H_a data was accepted. This could be summarized that there was a significant effect on students' speaking ability using RealLife English application.

Discussion

Based on the data analysis, the researcher concluded that the use of RealLife English application can help students to improve their speaking ability. This has been supported by the findings of the hypothesis test, which reveal sig (2-tailed) a

probability of 0,000 which was less than 0,05. As a result, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted, and it was acceptable to conclude that utilizing the RealLife English application had a significant effect on students' speaking abilities.

Moreover, the results of the tests obtained by students when taking the test are also shown. Based on the pre-test results showed that the experimental group had a higher mean score (55.55) than the control group (41.53), which indicated a higher basic ability in the experimental group. The post-test results showed an improvement in the experimental group, where the average score increased to 75.55 which signified an increase of 20 points. This improvement was evident in the frequency distribution, with a large number of students scoring in the "Good" and "Excellent" categories. In contrast, the control group showed an increase to an average score of 58.05 which marked an increase of 16.52 points, with most students scoring in the "Fair" category. This comparison showed that the experimental using RealLife English application resulted in a greater increase in scores compared to the conventional method used in the control class.

As technology advances and innovations in language education, the applications that offer interactive and immersive experiences such as Reallife English have become invaluable tools in the development of English language skills. These applications, along with various other similar platforms, such as Ome-TV and OpenTalk provide an environment that supports real-time speaking practice and interactive conversations, which have proven to be effective in improving students' speaking skills. Supporting these findings, Siahaan (2023). Explore how the independent students exchanged in the English department of Nommensen HKBP University Medan's sixth semester used the RealLife English application to assist in their acquisition of communicative or general speaking English skills.

The results of the study showed that students understood communicative English skills effectively, and that using RealLife English applications as successful media gave them the confidence and freedom to speak English with others by putting them in situations where they could avoid people who would constantly criticize them for their mistakes. Similarly Suryanto & Fitriwan (2023) explored the Ome-TV application and found it effective for improving speaking skills among students at the Islamic Private University of Yogyakarta. The application provided an engaging environment for real-time speaking practice and interactive conversation, which contributed to the improvement of speaking proficiency.

While, Safitri (2022) assessed the OpenTalk application at MAN Kendal among tenth grade students, which revealed that the application significantly improved speaking skills compared to the control group. Collectively, these studies highlight the effectiveness of media tools in advancing speaking skills, demonstrating their valuable role in supporting practical language development. Overall, the previous research and this study underline that digital media applications can play an important role in the development of speaking skills. Thus, it can be concluded that for interactive and engaging language practice, these applications can help students for enhance their speaking skills effectively.

4. Conclusion

The research indicates that with the problem found in students where the lack of use of interactive and interesting media, the use of RealLife English application can help students at SMK Negeri 4 pekanbaru in the process of learning English, especially in speaking. The findings showed that the experimental group using the RealLife English application had a significant improvement compared to the control group in the mean scores of pre-test and post-test. Statistical analysis with paired sample t-test revealed a p-value of 0.000, which confirmed that the improvement was statistically significant and supported the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (H_a).

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