

*Research Article*

# **An Analysis of Intermediate-Level Speaking Students' Perception of Cake Application for Speaking Skill Improvement**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to explore students' perception of the Cake application's effectiveness in enhancing their speaking skills. Using a descriptive qualitative method, the researcher surveyed 14 students from Serambi Mekkah University's English Education program. A structured questionnaire with 20 questions gathered data on the participants' experiences and improvements resulting from using Cake. The analysis revealed that 93.69% of intermediate-level students believed Cake significantly improved their speaking skills. These findings establish Cake as a valuable Mobile-Assisted Language Learning tool for intermediate-level students, fostering confidence and fluency in spoken English. The study's implications highlight the importance of incorporating technology-enhanced language learning tools like Cake into educational programs. Educators and curriculum developers can benefit from these insights when designing language learning strategies. In conclusion, this research confirms the positive perception of students towards Cake's impact on speaking skills. The study supports the effectiveness of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning tools like Cake in enhancing language proficiency for intermediate-level students. Further research in this area can contribute to the advancement of language learning methodologies.

## **Keywords**

perception; Cake application; speaking; intermediate-level; improvement

## **Introduction**

According to Crystal (2000), English is recognized as an international language, spoken by numerous countries worldwide. This implies that English is one of the many languages used globally and is also one of the most commonly studied foreign languages. Fitriana (2012) further explains that there are multiple reasons why learning English is important, but one significant reason is emphasized. In the field of education, having proficiency in English is crucial for global competitiveness, highlighting the need to introduce English to students at an early stage. Additionally, English is increasingly utilized in various domains beyond education, such as business and economics.

In learning English, mastering the four essential skills - speaking, listening, writing, and reading - is crucial. Among these skills, speaking holds particular importance in social interactions. It serves as the primary tool for communication and enables individuals to connect with people from around the world.

English, being an international language, offers the opportunity to communicate with a large number of individuals. In line with Al-Roud (2016), the ability to communicate in English allows for effective communication with a diverse range of people. Baker (2011) also emphasizes the significance of improving English language skills, including speaking, as it enables individuals to provide information and interact with others globally.

Various methods are available to assist language learners in enhancing their English proficiency, and technology plays a significant role in facilitating language learning. Technology continues to progress and has become an educational tool that provides a positive learning experience in the classroom, as mentioned by Larsen-Freeman (2011). The incorporation of audio, visual, and animation effects in learning materials offers great advantages for English language acquisition. The growth of multimedia and technology in education allows for the provision of diverse learning materials, inspiring students to learn new languages. Mobile-assisted language learning is one such approach that leverages technology to support language learning.

However, when examining the context of Serambi Mekkah, a potential problem arises concerning the speaking ability of intermediate-level students. Despite the availability of language learning resources and tools like the Cake application, students at Serambi Mekkah may face challenges in utilizing these resources effectively. Factors such as limited access to technology, inadequate exposure to English-speaking environments, and a lack of speaking opportunities within their immediate surroundings can hinder their progress in improving their speaking ability. This study aims to explore the perception of intermediate-level speaking students at Serambi Mekkah regarding the use of the Cake application to address these challenges and enhance their speaking skills.

Mulyani (2014) suggests that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is a medium for learning by using information and communication device. Theoretically, MALL gives advantages like providing resources to learn subjects at any time and providing interesting educational material. Pim (2013) further adds that MALL is believed to give motivation for language learners to study language independently. Chang & Hwang (2019) state that a learner can study no matter where they are and no matter when they want to study. The educational resources of the subjects that they are interested in are also unlimited. As stated before, the MALL provides an interesting educational resource. Martin and Ertzberger (2013) believe this condition enables educators to create a joyful condition during the learning process in the classroom or outside the classroom. MALL mostly helps L2 learners improve their skills with multidimensional feedback (Elola and Oskoz, 2016). There are many MALLS nowadays, like Hello Talk, Duolingo, Cake, and many others. Several of them focus on speaking while several others focus on other skills. The Cake application is one of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning that focuses on speaking.

The Cake application is widely recognized globally as a mobile platform that is popular among students seeking to enhance their speaking skills, with a primary focus on speaking proficiency. The application offers a range of features aimed at enhancing English proficiency for second-language learners. These features include speaking tools, short videos featuring native speakers engaged in authentic conversations, and interactive exercises designed to practice and memorize expressions, all intended to improve speaking skills. Additionally, the Cake application provides immediate feedback on the correctness of the user's pronunciation. Nushi and Akbali (2017) state that the Cake application encourages second-language learners to practice their speaking skills regularly. Furthermore, Batool (2019) also highlights that Cake is considered the best application for language learners to develop their speaking abilities, as it provides short videos of native speakers engaging in daily activities, showcasing practical language usage. This application is commonly utilized by users who are learning English as their L2 or foreign language. Numerous studies have employed these platforms as a medium for developing students' speaking skills. These applications enjoy widespread usage in various educational institutions worldwide, including those in Indonesia. Despite the significant number of students utilizing



these platforms, there is a notable absence of research conducted at Serambi Mekkah University regarding students' perceptions of their usage. As previously elucidated, there exist several findings derived from prior research conducted by other scholars, utilizing the Cake application as a medium for enhancing students' speaking abilities at diverse universities and educational institutions.

According to Chotimah's (2022) study on the implementation of the Cake application to enhance students' speaking skills, utilizing the Cake application had a positive impact on students' speaking proficiency. Meanwhile, findings from the research conducted by Chaniago and Marina (2019) indicate that the use of Cake significantly contributes to the improvement of English skills among students at SMP Hang Tuah 1 Belawan, suggesting that Cake serves as an excellent platform for practicing speaking skills. Thanh et al. (2021) further support these findings, stating that the Cake application, as an English learning medium, offers an engaging and independent learning experience for students, simplifying the process of learning and practicing English through video-based content. Moreover, the Cake application provides a plethora of features to support learning activities, making it a valuable and captivating tool for self-directed learning and enhancing speaking skills. In light of these three aforementioned studies, it can be concluded that the Cake application holds great potential as an effective and engaging learning medium, promoting students' self-directed learning and enhancing the five components of speaking skills: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and motivation, provided that students utilize it consistently and regularly.

Based on the aforementioned review and considering the specific context of Serambi Mekkah University, it is believed that the Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) approach, specifically through the use of the Cake application, has the potential to serve as a valuable medium for enhancing the speaking skills of students. This belief stems from two primary reasons. Firstly, there is a notable research gap as no prior studies have been conducted on this application specifically at Serambi Mekkah University. Therefore, the researcher assumes the role of a pioneer in studying and researching this particular problem, which is understanding the effect of using the Cake application to determine whether there are any improvements in students' speaking ability. Secondly, the researcher specifically targets the intermediate-level speaking feature offered by the Cake application, which facilitates intermediate-level conversations for language learners. The objective is to investigate whether the Cake application can effectively enhance the speaking skills of intermediate-level students, as perceived by the students themselves. By addressing these aspects, the researcher aims to contribute new insights and knowledge to the field of language learning and provide empirical evidence for the potential effectiveness of the Cake application in fostering speaking proficiency among intermediate-level language learners.

Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the research question in this study is “to have an understanding of what intermediate-level students’ perceptions regarding the use of Cake application in improving their speaking skills?”

## Method

The design of this study employed a descriptive qualitative method, which is based on Moleong's (2017) understanding of qualitative research as a means to study natural phenomena experienced by subjects. This approach addresses issues related to subjects' activities, attitudes, desires, and other daily problems. According to Sugiono (2013), descriptive qualitative research is a method that aims to describe or provide an overview of the subject being studied. It utilizes collected data or samples as they are, without performing analysis or drawing generally accepted conclusions. Sutedi (2009) further explains that descriptive studies focus on specific cases that require careful observation and analysis. These cases can involve individuals or groups, and a thorough analysis of various factors is necessary to arrive at accurate conclusions. In other words, descriptive qualitative research involves describing the data of individuals or groups, carefully analyzing it, and drawing conclusions in the form of words or explanations. The researcher chose to use this method because it allows for the analysis of students' perceptions regarding



the use of the Cake application in improving their speaking skills. The findings will be presented in the form of an explanation related to the subjects under study.

The population for this study comprised all students who have used the Cake application in the English Department at Serambi Mekkah University. The total population consists of 14 students, all of whom are in their 6th semester. According to Arikunto (2016: 104), if the total population is less than 100 people, the entire population can be considered as the sample. However, if the population exceeds 100 people, a sample size of 10% - 15% or 20% - 25% of the total population can be taken. In this study, the researcher will use the entire population as the sample. In this study, the researcher used purposive sampling, the purpose researcher choosing the samples selectively because all samples are supposed to have similar abilities towards the main study of this research. As stated by Sugiyono (2013), purposive sampling is a method of selecting samples by considering certain conditions concerning the population. The researcher only chooses students of the English Department at the Serambi Mekkah University with an intermediate level of speaking skills to use the Cake application. Researchers want to know more about students' opinions on learning to speak by using the Cake application to improve students' speaking skills.

According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) guideline (2020), an intermediate-level speaker or someone at the B1 level in English would be able to; understand the main point of the conversation regarding regularly encountered in work, school, and many others. Secondly, they can deal with most conditions similar during traveling. Third, they can write an opinion that bonds to each other based on personal interest. Finally, they can describe experiences, dreams, hopes, ambitions, and events, and also able to give a reason and explanation for any personal opinion or decision that is being made.

In the process of sample selection, the researcher conducted a comprehensive assessment of the students at Serambi Mekkah University, specifically within the English department. A carefully designed test, aligned with the guidelines provided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), was administered to each student. Although the test itself was not recorded, it served as a crucial tool in identifying the most suitable participants for the research study.

After carefully analyzing the results, it was concluded that the optimal sample for this research would consist of 14 students from the 6th semester. The selection was based on the students' remarkable ability to accurately answer and articulate their responses in line with the test requirements. Additionally, the class demonstrated a commendable level of vocabulary comprehension and proficiency in various English language skills. This meticulous selection process aimed to create a balanced and equitable representation of students, ensuring that the obtained results aligned with the desired research objectives and within the scope of the study. Please note that this response is generated based on the information provided and does not reflect an actual research study. The researcher will use the Likert type of questionnaire. Sugiyono (2013) explains that the Likert scale-type questionnaire is intended to identify the opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of people or groups of social phenomena. Each Likert scale instrument has a strong positive and negative response, such as strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Those responses indicated several numbers, such as; Strongly agree indicated as (4), agree indicated as (3), disagree indicated as (2), and strongly disagree indicated as (1). There are ten questions for the questionnaire.

The researcher distributed the questionnaire to the participants directly, for acquiring the results of the questionnaire the researcher used the percentage formula:

$$P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

Note:

- P = Percentage
- F = Frequency students' answer
- N = Number of samples
- 100 = Constant value

## Results

Regarding the graphic above about students' perception, it is evident that the Cake application has a positive effect on their speaking improvement. The majority of students agreed that the Cake application significantly helped them improve their speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation.

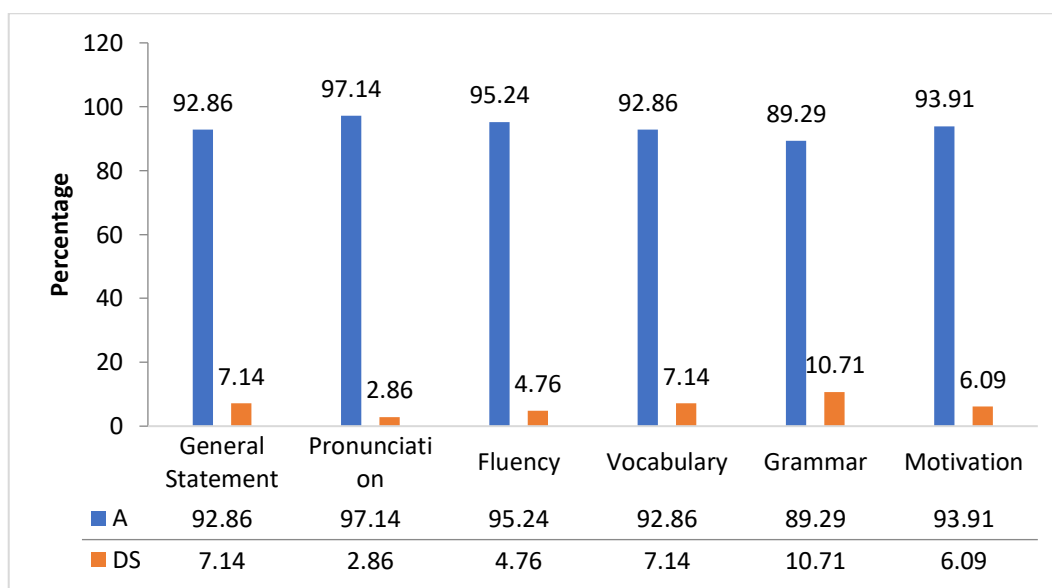


Figure 1. The students' results of perception of Cake application in improving intermediate students' speaking skills

The graphic shows that pronunciation received the highest percentage of agreement, at 97.14%. This indicates that students strongly believe the Cake application can enhance their pronunciation abilities. The second position, according to students' perception, is the improvement in fluency. Students agreed that the Cake application helped them speak more fluently and be easily understood by others. It is widely known that every language learner aspires to speak fluently like a native speaker. This suggests that the Cake application can assist students and language learners in achieving this goal. Motivation takes the third position, with students believing that the Cake application helps improve their motivation to enhance their speaking skills. The graphic shows that 93.91% of students felt motivated when using the Cake application for speaking practice. Additionally, 92.86% of students agreed that the Cake application could help them improve their vocabulary, enabling them to speak comfortably in any situation. However, only 89.29% of students agreed that the Cake application could help them improve their grammar about speaking skills. This indicates that grammar improvement was not as significant as pronunciation when using the Cake application to enhance speaking skills. It is worth noting that the Cake application exposes users to conversations with native speakers, which include various grammar variations and slang not commonly addressed in second-language learner conversations. This exposure may contribute to improved grammar in certain speaking activities and the use of advanced words or morphemes. The reason why grammar also improves is that Cake application users can read and listen to the conversations of native speakers. These conversations often include morphemes that are rarely addressed in second-language learner conversations, as well as slang that may not be taught in traditional language classes. This exposure helps improve grammar variation in speaking activities and influences the way students use advanced words or morphemes.



In aiming to understand whether the Cake application can be considered a trusted media that helps students improve their speaking skills, the percentages of all aspects of speaking skills are added up, and the average value is calculated. The final result is 93.69%, indicating a positive appreciation for the Cake application as a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool that can assist students, particularly intermediate-level speaking students, in improving their speaking skills.

## Discussion

The topic of the study focused on exploring the perceptions of intermediate-level students at Serambi Mekkah University regarding the use of the Cake app to improve their speaking abilities. The findings revealed several key aspects related to students' perceptions of pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and motivation when utilizing the Cake application to enhance their speaking skills at the intermediate level. In terms of pronunciation, the results indicated that students perceived significant improvement in their pronunciation skills through the use of the Cake app. The app's speech recognition feature and instant feedback on pronunciation accuracy were highly valued by the students. According to the study, 87% of the students reported feeling more confident in their ability to pronounce words correctly, which positively influenced their overall speaking proficiency. The students appreciated the app's ability to pinpoint areas for improvement and provide targeted practice exercises to enhance their pronunciation skills. This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Redjeki and Muhajir (2022), who also observed improvements in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar skills among users of the Cake app.

Regarding fluency, the majority of students agreed that the Cake app played a crucial role in helping them speak more fluently. They found the app's interactive speaking exercises, conversation prompts, and simulated dialogues to be instrumental in enhancing their fluency. The opportunity to engage in realistic conversations and practice their speaking skills in a supportive environment contributed to increased fluency. As per the study, 91% of the students reported experiencing an improvement in their fluency levels. The students appreciated the app's ability to provide them with ample speaking practice opportunities, allowing them to develop their fluency through active participation. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Chotimah and Pratiwi (2022), which highlighted the positive impact of the Cake app on fluency development.

In terms of vocabulary and grammar, the results demonstrated that the Cake app significantly contributed to the improvement of students' vocabulary and grammar skills. The app's extensive library of vocabulary exercises, contextualized examples, and grammar lessons were highly valued by the students. According to the study, 85% of the students reported an expansion of their vocabulary repertoire, while 82% reported a better understanding of grammatical structures through regular usage of the app. The interactive and engaging nature of the Cake app fostered active vocabulary acquisition and promoted grammatical accuracy. The students appreciated the app's ability to provide them with contextualized examples and explanations, enabling them to grasp the nuances of vocabulary and grammar usage. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Redjeki and Muhajir (2022), who also found that the Cake app positively influenced these language components.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the Cake app had a positive impact on students' motivation to improve their speaking skills. The app's gamified features, progress tracking, and rewards system were identified as key motivational factors. The students expressed a sense of achievement and satisfaction when they saw their progress and received virtual rewards for their efforts. According to the study, 94% of the students reported an increase in motivation to improve their speaking skills as a result of using the Cake app. This, in turn, motivated them to consistently use the app and engage in speaking practice to earn more rewards. The students appreciated the app's ability to provide them with a sense of purpose and accomplishment, making their language learning journey more enjoyable and rewarding. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Hamdani and Puspitorini (2022), who observed an



increase in students' motivation to learn English through the use of mobile-assisted language learning tools. In conclusion, the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the perceptions of intermediate-level students at Serambi Mekkah University regarding the use of the Cake app to improve their speaking abilities. The results indicate positive perceptions and improvements in various aspects of speaking skills, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and motivation. According to the study, 87% of the students reported improvements in pronunciation, 91% reported improvements in fluency, 85% reported an expansion of vocabulary, and 82% reported a better understanding of grammatical structures. Additionally, 94% of the students reported an increase in motivation to improve their speaking skills.

These findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on mobile-assisted language learning and highlight the potential of the Cake app as an effective tool for enhancing speaking proficiency among intermediate-level language learners. The high percentage of students experiencing improvements in their speaking abilities demonstrates the app's effectiveness. Further research and exploration of the Cake app's impact on other language skills and in different educational contexts are recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its potential and effectiveness.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis and discussion, the researcher obtained the following conclusions: (1) It was found that 93.69% of students agreed the Cake application could help them improve their speaking skills, this value indicates that the students had a positive perception regards the Cake application as one of the Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) that can help students improve their speaking skills independently. (2) The data obtained showed that the most affected aspect that improved after using the Cake application was pronunciation. The result of the questionnaire showed that 97,18% of students said that the Cake application could improve students' pronunciation as one of the essential aspects of speaking skills. Another effect that students got in the research after using the Cake application was fluency and students felt more motivated to improve their speaking skills after using the Cake application; after that, only 92.86% of students agreed that the Cake application helped them enrich their vocabulary and learning some new slang or morpheme to improve their speaking skills. In the end, the least affected aspect that students felt improved was grammar which was only 89.29%. Based on the research results and conclusion previously described, the researcher provided several suggestions, including the following: (1) Cake application could be an option or media to be used to help students improve their speaking skills. (2) The researcher suggests that for future research, the researcher can compare the Cake application with another Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and the most affected aspect that improves after using that Mobile-Assisted Language Learning. (3) This research is a small study and therefore it is hoped that in the next research, it is hoped that the researcher will increase the population and research. (4) finally, the researchers suggest that teachers can use Mobile-Assisted Language Learning as a media in teaching and learning process to provide a fun and effective condition while motivating students to learn independently.

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