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## The Use of Mall (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) by Using Elsa (English Language Speech Assistant) Speak for Students' Speaking Skills

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### Abstract

*This study examined the responses of 7th-grade students at SMP Negeri 5 Sidoarjo to the ELSA Speak application and its impact on enhancing their English-speaking skills. The research aimed to evaluate student feedback on ELSA Speak and assess its influence on their language learning outcomes. A descriptive qualitative approach was utilized, incorporating closed-ended questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to analyze technology adoption and usage. Despite the challenges, ELSA Speak significantly improved students' speaking skills. While there were technical issues related to the difference in access between free and premium versions, the overall positive impact on student engagement and proficiency highlighted ELSA Speak's potential as a valuable educational tool.*

**Keywords:** ELSA Speak, Technology Acceptance Model, English Speaking Skills.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The technology in the Society 5.0 era significantly impacted societal order, as highlighted by Adminz D (2019). The onset of COVID-19 in 2019 in China and its emergence in Indonesia in 2020 necessitated rapid adaptation in education, shifting from face-to-face interactions to online-based learning. This global shift fundamentally altered educational methods, making E-learning a new norm. As the pandemic transitioned

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to an endemic phase, educational institutions worldwide integrated electronic devices and internet access into their teaching systems. Teachers had to utilize hybrid education methods to create engaging and innovative learning experiences.

The increasing importance of renewable technology in education became evident in the adoption of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). These mobile-based educational apps offered interactive learning tools and enhanced accountability for educators and students, providing an alternative to solitary study. Embracing MALL supported a shift from traditional teacher-centered learning to a student-centered approach, aligning with Indonesia's new curriculum, *kurikulum merdeka belajar*, which prioritized student-centered education. Tran Veena, Sheetal Mahendra, and Vijay (2020) emphasized the importance of technology in educating the next generation, highlighting the need for teachers to explore easy-to-use applications that enhance teaching quality and facilitate student learning.

In Indonesia, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) was employed to enhance students' comprehension of English, the primary second language studied in schools. This advanced technology aided in mastering English, which was crucial for communication, offering numerous benefits like respect and better job opportunities, and fostering professional relationships globally. English played a vital role in the globalization era, as "language is one of the numerous elements influencing success and progress in the domains of the economy, culture, and society," uniting nations worldwide (Tran & Nguyen, 2018). Recognizing the value of acquiring different languages, Indonesian educators focused on developing human resources to compete internationally. Language proficiency involved mastering listening, reading, writing, and speaking, with MALL playing a significant role in transforming these educational practices.

Based on the problems faced in grade 7 at SMP Negeri 5 Sidoarjo, where this research was conducted, students faced significant challenges in speaking activities. They struggled to explain meanings, misspelled words, used incorrect intonation, and exhibited a lack of confidence in verbal responses. Factors contributing to these difficulties included limited vocabulary, fear of mistakes, low motivation and confidence, shyness, dissatisfaction with teaching methods, and a general reluctance

to engage in English learning. Additionally, students often found studying English tedious and uninteresting (Nurillah and Indari, Journal, 2021: 2).

To guide this investigation, the following research questions were proposed:

1. How was ELSA Speak implemented as a student learning media?
2. How did students' responses to the ELSA Speak application reflect its impact on their language learning?

To carry out the goals of this study, based on the background of the study and the research questions, there were two primary objectives determined:

1. To analyze the student experience regarding the integration of ELSA Speak in the learning process.
2. To identify the overall satisfaction of students with the ELSA Speak application as a learning tool.

The researcher chose the mobile-based application "ELSA Speak" (English Language Speech Assistant) to address these issues after exploring several language acquisition apps. ELSA provided an AI speech coach, offering a user-friendly interface with various topics, skill levels, and functionalities. Users could select their preferred display language and level, from beginner to advanced, making it easier to match their abilities (Becker, Journal, 2019: 2). This study aimed to provide students with enjoyable learning experiences and new insights into using mobile applications for English learning, both in and out of the classroom, and to offer insights for future researchers on the usefulness of technology as an educational tool.

This research stood out from previous studies by concentrating specifically on junior high school students using the ELSA Speak app to enhance their speaking skills via Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Unlike Ahn and Michelle Lee's (2016) study, which broadly examined user experiences with mobile speaking apps employing speech recognition technology, this study focused solely on the ELSA Speak app. Additionally, it diverged from Metruk's (2017) study focused on electronic dictionaries used by Slovak language learners for practicing pronunciation, aiming to enhance speaking skills comprehensively rather than focusing solely on one aspect of language learning.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning)

Learning English using media based on mobile phone technology was an innovation recently applied in language learning. Multiple experts described MALL as the application of smartphones and other mobile technologies to language learning, emphasizing contextual learning and portability that offered distinct advantages (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Scholars like Hoi (2020), Ezra and Cohen (2018), Shi, Luo, and He (2017), and Sun et al. (2017) further defined it as a self-paced learning environment facilitated by various mobile devices such as tablets, phones, or pads, which were used for teaching and learning languages.

Similarly, Kukulska-Hulme and Shield (2008) emphasized the flexibility that MALL provided, stating, "Mobile devices offered the potential for new ways of language learning, allowing learners to engage with language resources and activities in diverse contexts." These expert perspectives underscored the transformative nature of MALL in language education, emphasizing the importance of mobility, flexibility, and contextual engagement in the learning process.

### 2.2. ELSA Speak

The ELSA Speak app, which stands for English Language Speech Assistant, served as an effective tool for enhancing English pronunciation and communication skills. It was widely recognized for its comprehensive guidance on accurately pronouncing vowels, consonants, and word stress (Samad & Aminullah, 2019, p. 56). Additionally, Aratusa (2022) highlighted that teachers had integrated this app into their teaching methods to enrich the speaking-focused learning environment, while students benefited from frequent practice. The app's user-friendly design offered a variety of discussion topics that were valuable for improving speaking skills. By using the app during non-academic activities, students maintained a consistent practice routine without feeling overwhelmed by their studies. ELSA Speak supported the development of word and phrase stress, intonation, fluency, vowel articulation, and overall pronunciation.

To conclude, ELSA Speak, also known as the English Language Speech Assistant app, served as an effective tool for enhancing English pronunciation and communication abilities. It delivered detailed guidance on vowels, consonants, and word stress (Samad & Aminullah,

2019) and encouraged regular practice, as highlighted (Aratusa, 2022). The app's user-friendly interface and diverse range of discussion topics made it convenient for students to hone their speaking skills. Its accessibility allowed learners to engage in consistent practice without disrupting their schedules. By using ELSA Speak, users improved their stress patterns, intonation, fluency, vowel articulation, and overall pronunciation.

### **2.3. Speaking**

The cornerstone of communicative competence in language learning was speaking, which involved the ability to express ideas, communicate effectively, and grasp nuances within a specific linguistic context. This skill incorporated elements such as pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and pragmatic understanding, extending beyond mere linguistic accuracy. Speaking, as described by Mohammed (2015), citing Brown (1994) and Burns & Joyce (1997), was a collaborative process of generating, receiving, and interpreting information to construct meaning. Additionally, Armasita (2017) highlighted that speaking served as a tool for interpersonal interaction, enabling individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and ideas spontaneously through verbal expression.

## **3. METHODS**

This research conducted a descriptive qualitative study using observation, closed-ended questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. According to Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun (2012), qualitative research examines connections, occurrences, conditions, or resources. During the study, the researcher observed students in speaking lessons, interacting with them throughout the learning process and capturing these observations using video or audio recording equipment. The study aimed to explore how Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) through the use of ELSA Speak impacted students' speaking skills.

The primary instrument used in this research was a questionnaire comprising 20 closed-ended questions. These questions were grouped into three categories: the impact of ELSA Speak (such as its effect on pronunciation, motivation, and confidence), the experience of using the app (including usability, routine integration, and student engagement), and the features of the app (such as interface design and technical functions). A Likert scale was employed to capture students' perceptions,

with options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." This method allowed the researcher to collect structured quantitative data, which was analyzed to determine that using ELSA Speak significantly improved students' speaking abilities.

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 students to gather qualitative data. These interviews explored students' experiences with ELSA Speak, focusing on challenges, motivation, and personal strategies for language learning. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure effective communication and were used to provide deeper insights into the quantitative findings. The integration of both data sources offered a more comprehensive understanding of how ELSA Speak influenced the students' speaking skills.

The research applied the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to evaluate technology adoption, focusing on two key aspects: Perceived Ease of Use and Perceived Usefulness. TAM was used to assess how students found the app's navigation and how they believed it contributed to their language learning. This framework helped structure the analysis of the app's effectiveness, with TAM being widely applied across various educational contexts to measure technology adoption and its impact. The study took place at a seventh-grade class in Sidoarjo State Junior High School, where the researcher had previously completed four months of Pengenalan Lingkungan Persekolah (PLP) activities. During this period, the researcher became familiar with the school's learning system and student dynamics, identifying challenges in English learning, particularly in speaking. To address these issues, the researcher introduced the AI-based mobile application, ELSA Speak, to improve students' speaking skills. The study involved 24 students from Class 7-8, including 18 females and 6 males, who filled out the questionnaires. Additionally, 10 randomly selected students participated in interviews to offer further insights into the learning environment and the impact of the technology (Creswell, 2012).

To assess the impact of ELSA Speak, a detailed plan for data collection was established. The researcher distributed a questionnaire with multiple-choice questions to students across five junior high schools in Sidoarjo. The questionnaire aimed to assess the frequency of app usage, its perceived effectiveness, and any self-reported improvements in

speaking skills. The responses were measured using a Likert scale, offering four options to gauge students' attitudes toward the application (Adams, 2008). The questionnaire was provided in both English and Indonesian to ensure clarity and accuracy in responses.

The researcher also conducted semi-structured interviews with ten students from the seventh grade at Sidoarjo State Junior High School. These interviews delved into students' personal experiences with ELSA Speak, their motivation for using the app, and their perceptions of its effectiveness in improving their speaking abilities. The qualitative data from these interviews were integrated with the questionnaire findings to provide a well-rounded understanding of how MALL, specifically ELSA Speak, influenced students' speaking skills.

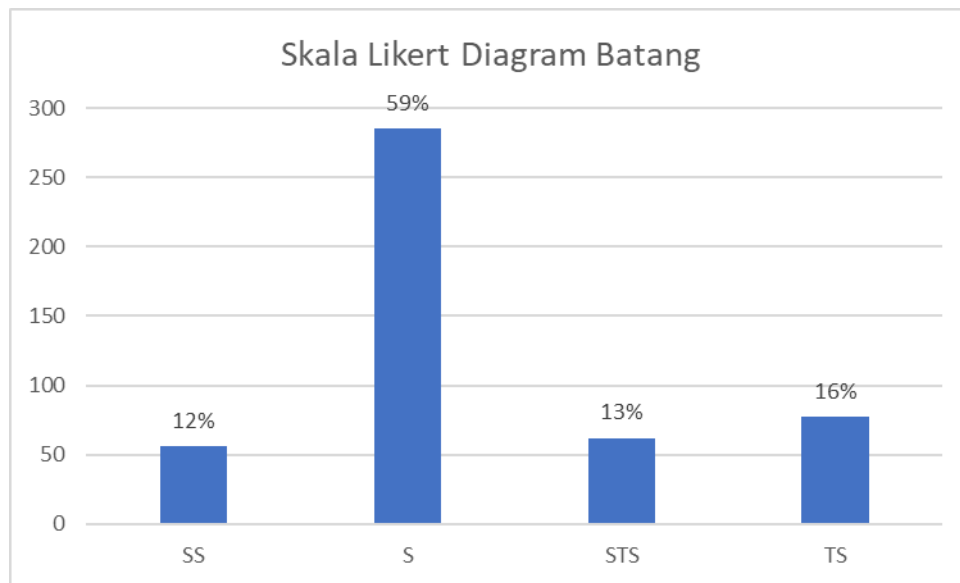
To evaluate students' speaking skills, the researcher followed several steps: first, a comprehensive research plan was developed, outlining the study's objectives, scope, procedures, and timelines. A qualitative descriptive approach was then applied to analyze how interactions with the ELSA Speak app affected students' speaking proficiency. Key variables included students' speaking abilities and their level of engagement with the app. Data collection techniques included reflections, questionnaires, and interviews, all aimed at gaining qualitative insights into the impact of MALL on students' language skills. The analysis sought to evaluate the effectiveness of MALL in improving speaking skills and to provide a foundation for future research in this area.

## **4. RESULTS**

### **4.1. How Is ELSA Speak Being Implemented as A Student Learning Media?**

The first section was the result of the questionnaire. The researcher tried to break down the first question, how ELSA Speak was being implemented as a student learning media. To answer the question, the researcher acquired the data from the questionnaire containing 20 closed-ended questions from 24 students with the answer format Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), using the Indonesian language to make it easier for students to understand the meaning of the questions. This questionnaire contained 20 questions in Indonesian, which covered 3 main indicators: the impact of ELSA Speak,

the experience of using the application, and the features of the application. The questionnaire aimed to provide a deeper insight into the results of using the application for approximately 1 month. The results were as follows:



**Figure 1. The result of The Questionnaire**

**Table 1. The Table Frequency Distribution of The Students' Answers Toward The Use of ELSA Speak**

No.	Statements	SS	S	STS	TS
1	ELSA Speak significantly enhances my pronunciation skills.	(4) 17%	(17) 71%	(3) 12%	(0) 0%
2	I regularly incorporate ELSA Speak into my language learning routine.	(1) 4%	(13) 54%	(4) 17%	(6) 25%
3	I feel more confident in my pronunciation using ELSA Speak.	(3) 13%	(16) 67%	(3) 12%	(2) 8%
4	ELSA Speak has noticeably improved my word & sentence stress and intonation.	(5) 21%	(16) 67%	(2) 8%	(1) 4%
5	The interface of ELSA Speak is user-friendly for practicing and improving speaking skills.	(8) 33%	(13) 54%	(2) 8%	(1) 5%
6	I find the progression of difficulty in ELSA Speak exercises appropriate for my skill level.	(5) 21%	(14) 58%	(2) 8%	(3) 13%
7	The speaking exercises in ELSA Speak	(6)	(13)	(2)	3)

	are engaging and enjoyable.	25%	54%	8%	13%
8	ELSA Speak has improved my ability to speak clearly.	(3) 13%	(16) 67%	(3) 13%	(2) 7%
9	I feel that ELSA Speak complements my traditional language learning methods effectively.	(2) 8%	(16) 67%	(4) 17%	(2) 8%
10	ELSA Speak has helped me overcome specific pronunciation difficulties I had before.	(4) 17%	(16) 67%	(2) 8%	(2) 8%
11	I feel more motivated to practice speaking when using ELSA Speak compared to traditional methods.	(1) 4%	(15) 63%	(2) 8%	(6) 25%
12	The instructions provided within ELSA Speak exercises are clear and easy to understand.	(2) 8%	(17) 71%	(2) 8%	(3) 13%
13	The accuracy of ELSA Speak in recognizing and correcting my pronunciation errors is commendable.	(1) 4%	(16) 67%	(2) 8%	(5) 21%
14	I prefer using ELSA Speak for speaking practice over traditional language learning methods.	(1) 4%	(16) 67%	(2) 8%	(5) 21%
15	I use ELSA Speak consistently across different devices (e.g., smartphones, and tablets).	(2) 8%	(7) 29%	(6) 25%	(9) 38%
16	I can easily track my progress within ELSA Speak without encountering difficulties.	(1) 4%	(18) 75%	(3) 13%	(2) 8%
17	I maintain a consistent schedule for practicing with ELSA Speak.	(0) 0%	(10) 42%	(5) 21%	(9) 37%
18	Using ELSA Speak has positively impacted public speaking pronunciation skills.	(5) 21%	(15) 63%	(3) 13%	(1) 3%
19	I prefer practicing speaking skills alone rather than with friends within the ELSA Speak app.	(2) 8%	(12) 50%	(4) 17%	(6) 25%
20	Adjusting settings, such as volume or exercise difficulty, within ELSA Speak is complex.	(0) 0%	(9) 38%	(6) 25%	(9) 37%

Based on the findings of the questionnaires that were answered by students to address the questions from the first inquiry about the students' responses toward the ELSA Speak application, the results provided by students mostly led to positive answers. The data obtained through 20 closed-ended questions showed that most respondents answered in the affirmative, with a 59% positive outlook. The students perceived that the ELSA app could help them improve their speaking skills. Aeni et al. (2021) affirmed that students held positive attitudes

toward learning spoken language through the ELSA application. Thus, this showed that the app was a useful tool in addressing common challenges language learners faced.

#### **4.2. How Do Students' Responses to The Elsa Speak Application Reflect Its Impact on Their Language Learning?**

In the second section, the researcher discussed the result of the second research question, how students' responses to the ELSA Speak application reflected its impact on their language learning. This chapter strengthened the results of the questionnaire that had been filled in by 24 students of SMP Negeri 5 Sidoarjo using the semi-interview method conducted by 10 students, focusing on 4 questions in Indonesian that covered student responses to both their experience with and features of ELSA Speak. The following were the results of the interview:

##### **Q1. How do you feel about your progress with your spoken English?**

P1 : I felt very happy after using the ELSA Speak application because after using this application I felt that my language skills had improved quite a lot, especially in the pronunciation section, which I felt needed to be improved.

P3 : I felt quite satisfied after using this application, even though I had only heard of it, I felt this application could help me in learning to speak English.

P5 : After using this application, I felt quite helpful; moreover, I had been quite consistent in using it. After several tries, it routinely made it easier for me to speak English little by little.

Based on the responses from the 10 participants, it appeared that their answers were fairly consistent. This suggested that the ELSA Speak application could have enhanced students' motivation and provided more opportunities for verbal practice in the target language (Underwood, 2017). Many of the responses indicated that students had found the application helpful and enjoyable for daily speaking practice.

## **Q2. Do You Have Any Favorite Features or Exercises Within ELSA Speak That You Enjoy Using The Most**

P2 : The features that I liked were the topic and ability features. I chose this feature because there were lots of speaking exercises in English that could improve my speaking skills in English.

P4 : I often tried the ELSA AI conversations feature so that my English skills would improve more quickly because there were lots of conversation exercises that could be tried for free, making learning feel like I was directly with a foreigner.

P6 : The improved pronunciation feature was what I liked the most because I still needed to learn more about what good pronunciation looked like, so this feature was suitable for me to use frequently to practice.

From the feedback provided by 10 students, it was clear that there was considerable variation in their preferences for different features, though it was evident that all features were equally useful. According to Khampusaen et al. (2023), ELSA Speak integrated gamification elements to make the learning process more engaging and enjoyable. Additionally, each feature offered unique benefits tailored to the specific needs of its users.

## **Q3. How Do You Maintain Consistency In Using ELSA Speak For Speaking Practice, Especially During Busier Periods?**

P7 : I regularly used the ELSA Speak application in the afternoon because that's when I was quite free.

P8 : I often used the ELSA Speak application when I was free from daily activities and usually at night during study hours.

P9 : I always used the ELSA Speak application regularly at around 7 or 8 pm after studying; apart from that, I also opened this application at that time because I was more focused on working on it.

The interview results indicated that most students used the ELSA Speak app for daily practice, typically studying in the evening around 7 or 8 pm. The others used it during their free time either at school or

elsewhere. Muñoz (2011) emphasized that regular exposure to the target language was essential for effective language acquisition. Therefore, making the most of learning opportunities outside of school hours was an important investment for students to consistently practice English.

**Q4. Based On Your Experience, Would You Recommend ELSA Speak To Others To Improve Their Speaking Skills? Why or Why Not?**

P1 : I recommended ELSA Speak to other people who wanted to improve their speaking ability because ELSA Speak helped them improve their speaking ability.

P5 : Yes, I recommended this application to other people and told them to choose the paid features so they could freely practice without being subject to usage limits.

P10 : Yes, I recommended the application to people, especially friends who had difficulty speaking English, because using the ELSA Speak application had made me addicted to trying it.

From the interviews conducted, it can be concluded that all students recommended the ELSA Speak app for learning English, particularly for speaking practice. They believed that the app could help them become more comfortable with speaking a foreign language, especially if they opted for the paid version with additional features. According to the ELSA Speak website, the paid version offered over 3,000 lessons covering 22 essential skills for mastering English pronunciation. It provided an ad-free experience, which helped users stay focused and complete lessons more efficiently. The app also offered advanced feedback to pinpoint areas for improvement, a personalized learning plan for quicker progress, and tracked users' development, enabling them to see significant growth in a short time.

**5. DISCUSSION**

This chapter explored how ELSA Speak, a mobile app for language learning, enhanced students' speaking abilities. By using advanced speech recognition, ELSA Speak provided real-time, personalized feedback essential for improving speaking skills. Aeni et al. (2021) highlighted that

the app offered guidance, native audio, practice sessions, feedback, and simulated conversations, all of which boosted motivation. The study identified factors hindering English speaking, such as vocabulary gaps, fear of mistakes, lack of motivation, confidence, and interest. It aimed to assess student responses to ELSA Speak and its impact on their learning. Questionnaire results indicated that students had a positive view of ELSA Speak. Out of 20 closed-ended questions, 59% of respondents had a favorable outlook, believing the app improved their speaking skills. Aeni et al. (2021) confirmed that students had positive attitudes toward learning with ELSA, showing it was an effective tool for overcoming common language learning challenges.

The app offered features like spelling verification, feedback on speaking and pronunciation, and flexibility in speed and proficiency. It used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis (in Yi He, Qimei Chen & Sakawrat Kitkuakul, 2018), which students found useful for improving their speaking skills through personalized feedback. The app's intuitive design and interactive features made it easy to use for students of varying technological abilities. Semi-structured interviews revealed that students reported positive experiences with ELSA Speak after a month of use, praising its engagement and motivational aspects. The app's perceived usefulness and ease of use aligned with TAM, indicating that students found it both beneficial and easy to navigate. Rinaepi et al. (2022) found ELSA Speak effective for vocational students, enhancing learning through practical theories and gamified features. Aminullah and Samad (2019) also noted that modern language apps boosted student motivation, which was crucial for improving speaking skills.

Challenges with ELSA Speak included the limited features for free users, which affected practice depth and frequency. Reinders and Pegrum (2016) noted that additional features required payment, leading to less frequent use and varied learning outcomes. Despite this, the study suggested that ELSA Speak should be combined with other learning strategies for a comprehensive approach. The 4.0 education era emphasized student independence and the use of diverse media (Samad & Ismail, 2020). In summary, ELSA Speak aligned with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), highlighting how students' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use affected their engagement with MALL

applications. Positive feedback from surveys and interviews demonstrated ELSA Speak's effectiveness in enhancing language skills. Educators could use these insights to implement MALL strategies, ensuring the sustainability of innovative language learning technologies.

## 6. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the research findings, it was concluded that AI-based applications like ELSA Speak had significantly impacted language learning. The implementation of ELSA Speak in 7th and 8th grades received positive feedback, with 59% of students affirming its effectiveness through a questionnaire. Qualitative data from interviews with 10 students further highlighted how ELSA Speak's interactive elements and personalized feedback enhanced their language skills. Despite technical issues related to access disparities between free and premium users, the overall positive impact on student engagement and speaking proficiency underscored ELSA Speak's value as an educational tool.

The researcher offered recommendations for English teachers, students, and future researchers to enhance speaking skills through effective techniques and methods. For students, it was crucial to have used the ELSA Speak app consistently, both during and outside of study time, and to have engaged in language clubs and additional activities to improve communication skills. Similarly, teachers were advised to have integrated ELSA Speak into their curriculum, mastering its use to foster student learning and innovation, while also ensuring that students could fully access the app's features. Furthermore, future researchers were encouraged to monitor student success with ELSA Speak over extended periods and to broaden their research to include multiple classes, thereby providing more comprehensive and reliable results.

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