

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Today's technological advancements have contributed significantly to virtually every element of human existence, including the educational system. Multiple studies have demonstrated that incorporating technology such as mobile devices into the teaching and learning process offers students considerable benefits. Mobile learning has been viewed as a revolution in e-learning for the teaching and learning process. Mobile learning allows students to learn regardless of time or location. In other words, mobile learning may function as a portable teaching and learning instrument (Curum & Khedo, 2021). Howlett & Waemusa (2019) also performed a study on student learning with mobile devices within and outside of the classroom. They separated their studies into two distinct tiers. The first study was done at the university level to analyze the deployment of Android devices.

In contrast, the second study was undertaken at primary schools to investigate the integration of mobile digital technology in the form of tablets and iPads. The two test situations determined that mobile learning raised students' interest and fostered an enjoyable learning environment. It is evident that incorporating mobile technology into student learning has a good effect, as it encourages students to be more conscious and accountable for their own learning. Students may monitor their own learning and enhance their creativity using this technology since they can use cell phones to access, explore, and study any

material connected to their formal learning process and surroundings (Cabrera-Solano et al., 2020). The use of mobile applications in the teaching and learning a language skill or set of information is one kind of mobile learning. Several applications have been defined in order to achieve language and skill objectives. Some applications, for instance, are designed to increase pupils' English skills. Other programs emphasize certain English skills, such as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, or a particular aspect of English knowledge, such as Vocabulary, Grammar, or Pronunciation.

Mobile technologies, portable devices, and internet connectivity, such as smartphones and tablets, are becoming integral to contemporary human existence. They are utilized for a variety of purposes, including educational and learning endeavors. According to Milheim et al. (2021), mobile devices enable students to explore their interests at their own speed, hence boosting their motivation to seek learning opportunities. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to the usage of mobile devices in the language-learning process. It is distinguished from Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) by the use of personal and portable devices that enable new forms of learning that highlight the continuity or spontaneity of access and interaction across diverse contexts of use (Katemba, 2019). Moreover, Sen (2021) reported that MALL's motto of 'learning anytime, anyplace' has been tremendously successful and continues to inspire in the twenty-first century. This adaptability of place and time encourages students to perform EFL activities. MALL may support both formal and informal learning. Hsu & Lin (2022) assert that incorporating mobile technology into learning can encourage active learner engagement, provide different formal and informal

learning environments, enhance situated learning, and support learning communities.

Smartphones are by far the most prevalent Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) device (Nuraeni et al., 2020), and it appears that the majority of MALL activities employ mobile phones as mobile devices (Hoi & Mu, 2021). Mobile applications are transforming smartphones into teaching instruments. Mobile applications or mobile apps are software designed to operate on mobile devices like smartphones and tablets (Auliya et al., 2021). With the assistance of mobile applications, English learning is entering a new age. Using mobile applications to enhance English language learning can alleviate boredom, typically caused by conventional teaching techniques and time and space limitations. In addition, according to Octavia et al. (2019), MALL, which includes mobile apps, can connect formal and informal learning. This allows students to readily access supplemental information to explain concepts given by their English teachers.

Smartphone users may already select and download several free mobile programs from application stores such as the App Store (iOS smartphone) and Playstore (Android smartphone). Among the plethora of iOS and Android applications, quite a few aids with the acquisition of a second/foreign language (Narulita Mahendra, 2020). Moreover, a great variety of mobile applications for learning English have been developed. It was noted that speaking was the most challenging ability for students in the context of EFL and that not enough chances for speaking practice were provided (Almadhady et al., 2020). According to a number of studies, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students confront several

difficulties when learning the language. According to a study conducted by Navidinia et al. (2019), EFL students were unable to speak English fluently for a variety of reasons, including a lack of experience abroad, limited opportunities for speaking practice outside the classroom, anxiety when speaking, and a lack of textbooks that included everyday English. This is consistent with studies of Juniardi et al. (2020) indicating that the majority of students have trouble speaking freely in English owing to poor English knowledge, lack of confidence, and lack of drive. Furthermore, Kassem (2018) claimed that body language, the correct pronunciation of English letters, intonation, confidence, and the use of terminology has always issues that instructors and students have encountered. According to Darmawati et al. (2020), restricted time is one of the most common obstacles to EFL instruction in Indonesian schools, mainly when teaching speaking skills. Teachers should be able to teach four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) in 90 minutes, making it nearly hard for all pupils to complete the tasks, particularly the English-speaking activities. Therefore, the introduction of mobile applications on smartphones pertaining to English language learning offers students the means to boost their motivation to study English. Besides, the availability and adaptability of the mobile application provide students with more time to practice speaking. They can practice English outside of the classroom as well as in the classroom. In addition, Rajendran & Md Yunus (2021) notes that the usage of mobile applications for learning to speak has the ability to train and enhance specific components of English pronunciation, such as phonemes, stress, and intonation.

‘English Conversation Practice’ mobile application is one of the hundreds of speaking applications available in the app store that may be used to help students learn to speak. ‘English Conversation Practice’ is free software for smartphones that provides several exercises to learn to speak English. This application’s capabilities are intended for practicing pronunciation, intonation, accent, expressiveness in appropriate contexts, and even language acquisition. One of the benefits of the ‘English Conversation Practice’ application is the ability to connect with other English learners to practice the language together. This application also includes gaming elements to make learning to speak more entertaining and motivating. ‘English Conversation Practice’ is a valuable tool for everyone to practice English conversation. Students may develop their English speaking abilities with the help of a large number of categorized conversations at different levels. This application also has several resources for real-world scenarios and examinations.

On the other hand, this study is distinct from several pertinent prior investigations. A recent study (Irudayasamy et al., 2021) investigated the learning theories that support contemporary mobile applications for English language acquisition. Moreover, Kusmaryani et al. (2019) evaluated the usage of a mobile app to alleviate EFL speaking anxiety. The study found that the mobile application experience substantially impacted language acquisition by lowering EFL speaking anxiety. Furthermore, Syafiq et al. (2021) evaluated the effect of imitating YouTube tracks and audio on the improvement of EFL learners’ speaking abilities. Utilizing YouTube and imitation audio tracks influenced the effectiveness of EFL students’ speaking abilities, fluency, and pronunciation. The

majority of prior studies examining the use of mobile devices in English education have focused solely on professionals, language researchers, and researchers. Few research discloses students' perspectives of mobile technology, particularly the usage of mobile applications in language acquisition. However, student feedback regarding how they view mobile applications in their speaking learning process appears to be valued and seen as crucial to the implementation of any instructional intervention. In light of these facts, this study aims to investigate students' opinions of the use of mobile applications in learning to speak English, with an emphasis on the 'English Conversation Practice' application as a mobile application employed in the study for this purpose.

This study will take place in SMK Negeri 1 Gianyar. The choice of location for this study was based on a number of factors, including the fact that this school still uses Limited Face-to-Face Learning with blended learning model for English instruction. The Limited Face-to-Face Learning is a government program that prioritizes student safety in the learning process to overcome learning loss during online learning due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The learning can be done in class and online, in which allowing the students who study with mobile devices to immediately optimize their mobile devices for use with the 'English Conversation Practice' application, according to the first data gathered from interviews with students at this institution. The second reason is that, on average, pupils are able to operate applications for learning English. Therefore, the teachers have a high level of inventiveness in teaching English and are adept at using a variety of applications to enhance classroom learning. The third reason is that they are vocational students; thus, their speaking abilities would be

expected to improve since they will be able to apply them immediately upon graduation.

1.2 The Limitations of the Research

This research is confined to the area of speaking abilities in learning English in class X at SMK Negeri 1 Gianyar, which is a restriction of the problem. The sole mobile application utilized is ‘English Conversation Practice’ by TalkEnglish, which runs on the Android operating system and focuses on learning to speak. If participants are using the iOS operating system, the application’s name is ‘Speak English Conversation.’ These are identical apps that operate on various operating systems. They share same attributes.

1.3 Research Questions

From the preceding context above, the problems in this research can be formulated as follows.

1. How do EFL teachers’ perceptions of the implementation of the ‘English Conversation Practice’ application in speaking class?
2. How do EFL learners’ perceptions of the implementation of the ‘English Conversation Practice’ application in speaking class?
3. What variables impact EFL teachers’ and learners’ perceptions on the use of ‘English Conversation Practice’ application in speaking class?

1.4 The Objectives of the Research

Based on the aforementioned research questions, the objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To understand the EFL teachers' perceptions of the implementation of the 'English Conversation Practice' application in speaking class.
2. To understand the EFL students' perceptions of the implementation of the 'English Conversation Practice' application in speaking class.
3. To determine which variables impact EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions on the use of 'English Conversation Practice' application in speaking class.

1.5 The Significance of the Research

The researcher expects that this research will contribute to teaching and learning English. It has two significant implications, namely theoretical and practical significance.

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This research can contribute to the body of knowledge of Mobile Assisted Language learning especially to become a reference in the context of facilitating students' speaking skill practices by using English conversation practice application.

1.5.2 Practical Significance

1.5.2.1 For the Students

The results of this study will significantly assist students in the future since students, who wish to enhance their English language skills, mainly speaking, will be able to pick and employ the most effective mobile application.

1.5.2.2 For the Teachers

The results of this study may be utilized by English instructors to gain a deeper understanding of the usage of mobile applications in everyday English learning, particularly in speaking sessions. They must also be aware of how students feel while using mobile apps to study. The instructors may effectively fulfil their job based on students' input to mobile applications when learning to speak.

1.5.2.3 For Other Researchers

The results of this study can be utilized to offer other researchers with further information for future studies in the similar area. They may undoubtedly further their study by employing many programs that can educate students in speaking skills and integrated language abilities, as required by the 21st-century learning objectives.

