

Using Fondi Application to Escalate the Speaking Ability of EFL High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Gamification in learning introduces a new atmosphere for students learning English. Application-based learning offers accessibility and flexibility for users. This study aims to understand students' perceptions of the Fondi application and explore its effectiveness in enhancing English speaking skills. The research employs a case study method at MAN 1 Medan, using data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis follows Miles and Huberman's approach, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The study's informants are 11th-grade students using the Fondi application and English teachers. The findings indicate that students at MAN 1 Medan have positive perceptions of the Fondi application, feeling more motivated and confident in practicing English speaking. The gamification features of the application, such as challenges, points, and levels, have proven effective in increasing student engagement and English-speaking abilities. Additionally, the competition and collaboration elements within the Fondi application strengthen social interaction among students, providing an authentic and contextual learning experience. The author recommends that future researchers study the use of the Fondi application in various educational contexts with more diverse samples and longer research durations. Further research should also collect longitudinal data to observe the long-term impact of using this application.

Keywords: Fondi Application, EFL Gamification, Speaking Skill, Online Learning

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INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology in education has opened up some significant opportunities to improve the quality in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). In Indonesia, English speaking skills are crucial competency for high school students (Dana & Aminatun, 2022). However, a major challenge faced by students is the lack of opportunities to actively and contextually to practice speaking. This issue is often due to limited interactions with native speakers and environments that support English speaking practice (Islam et al., 2022). Additionally, traditional teaching methods that tend to focus on grammar and reading skills are insufficient to develop the speaking skills (Tarigan & Stevani, 2022). As a result, many students feel less confident and tend to be passive in applying spoken English.

However, improving English proficiency in students learning English as a foreign language is a challenge. Speaking English is a challenge for EFL students due to shyness, fear of criticism, and anxiety about making mistakes. Learning apps like Fondi have emerged as an innovative solution to overcome these challenges. Learning applications like Fondi have emerged as innovative solutions to address these challenges. Fondi is an application specifically designed to improve English speaking skills through direct interaction with other users, including native speakers and fellow learners from various parts of the world. This application provides a platform where students can practice speaking in real-time, receive

immediate feedback, and participate in various activities designed to develop their communication skills (Erlita & Putri, 2024). Furthermore, Fondi is equipped with features that allow students to record and review their conversations, enabling them to monitor their progress. With a user-friendly interface and a variety of conversation topics, Fondi makes the learning process more engaging and enjoyable for students (Arifiyana & Dzulfikri, 2023).

The use of Fondi in English learning activities in Indonesia offers great potential for enhancing students' speaking abilities. Through this application, students can access various features that encourage speaking practice, such as live conversations, pronunciation exercises, and group discussions (Ramli et al., 2021). Additionally, Fondi utilizes artificial intelligence technology to provide personalized feedback and recommendations that can help students correct mistakes and gradually improve their skills. Thus, students can learn independently and adjust their learning pace according to their individual needs (Maria Cati, 2024). The integration of gamification features in this application also provides additional motivation for students to continue practicing and improving their speaking skills. Through the use of applications like Fondi, students are expected to develop their speaking skills more optimally and be better prepared to face communication challenges in the era of globalization.

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of the Fondi application in enhancing the English-speaking skills of students at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 1 Medan. The primary focus of this research is to observe how the use of the application can motivate students to speak more active, boost their confidence, and overcome common obstacles in learning English. Additionally, this study will examine how interactions with native speakers and other users. It is expected that Fondi can enrich the students' learning experiences. The research is also expected to provide new insights into more effective and more productive in engaging English language teaching methods for students. The findings of this study are also anticipated to identify strategies that can be implemented in other schools to improve English speaking skills.

Previous researchers have not extensively studied the use of the Fondi application in English language learning. The lack of literature and prior research on this topic indicates that it has not been widely explored. However, the researchers found several relevant previous studies. First, Ibrahim & Ibrahim, (2019) reviewed the utilization of English language learning through mobile devices and recommended common assessment and evaluation approaches in this field of research. Second, a review by Arifiyana & Dzulfikri, (2023) of the fifty most popular commercial language learning applications for mobile phones identified three main trends: applications tend to teach vocabulary in isolation rather than in relevant contexts, these applications are less adaptive to individual learners' skills, and they rarely provide explanatory corrective feedback. Third, the advantages of learning through mobile devices have driven the development of numerous mobile applications across various domains, including health and language learning (Nicolaidou et al., 2023). Fourth, Hamad et al. (2019) found that learning applications such as YouTube videos and Listening to Imitation Audio Tracks are highly effective CALL resources for enhancing students' speaking skills. Fifth, another study involving the WhatsApp for ETL (Extract, transform, and load) application revealed that students can increase their vocabulary, improve their English, and learn from their friends' mistakes when they use WhatsApp (Hamad, 2017). According to Yosintha's (2022) report, most students had positive things to say about Elsa Speak, the program they used for their online pronunciation class, in the ELT (English Language Test) research.

Thus, this research is expected to offer new perspectives on the integration of technology in English language learning in Indonesia. The findings from this study are hoped to serve as greater foundation for developing more effective teaching strategies and promoting the use of technology as a tool to enhance English speaking quality. Furthermore, the results of this study can serve as a reference for other educational app developers in

creating innovative and effective learning tools. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the overall improvement of English language education quality in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study method at MAN 1 Medan. The informants in this study are 11th-grade students learning English using the Fondi application. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and documentation studies. Observations were conducted to obtain data on student behaviour and interactions while using the Fondi application during the English learning process. Interviews were conducted with one English teacher and five randomly selected students to gather information about their experiences, challenges faced, and perceptions of using the Fondi application. Documentation was used to collect data such as student learning outcomes, record the of learning activities, and other documents supporting this research.

The technique of data analysis used is based on Miles and Huberman's theory, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994). During the data reduction process, the information collected is simplified, grouped, and selected according to its relevance to the research objectives. Data display is done by presenting the reduced data systematically so that it is easy to understand and analyze further. Conclusion drawing or verification is carried out by interpreting the presented data to find patterns, relationships, and meanings relevant to the research focus. Thus, this study can provide an in-depth overview of the effectiveness of using the Fondi application in improving students' English-speaking skills and identify the supporting and inhibiting factors in the process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

Students' Perceptions of Fondi Applications in English Language Learning

MAN 1 Medan students' perceptions of the Fondi application in learning English show a positive view of the use of this application. Most students stated that this application presents a more interesting and interactive learning method compared to traditional methods which are often considered monotonous. This shows that the Fondi application has succeeded in bringing innovation to English language learning, which not only arouses students' interest but also makes the learning process more fun and dynamic.

Additionally, students appreciate the flexibility of the app that allows them to practice anytime and anywhere, which is one of the top features that they really appreciate. This flexibility gives them the opportunity to integrate English language practice into their daily routine, which previously may have been difficult with conventional learning methods. Thus, the Fondi application has succeeded in increasing student involvement in the learning process, which in turn encourages student motivation to study English more intensively. As one participant stated as follows:

"The Fondi app makes learning English more interesting and effective. Features like live conversation allow me to practice speaking in an interactive way, while pronunciation practice helps me improve the way I speak. Overall, the app makes me feel more confident in use English." (Interview, SAN, 2024)

However, not all students are completely satisfied with this application. Some students reported technical challenges, such as unstable internet connections, which prevented access to certain features in the Fondi app. These difficulties lead to frustration and can reduce the effectiveness of learning, especially when students cannot use the application smoothly when they need it. In addition, some students also felt dissatisfied with the limited direct feedback from native speakers, which, according to them, is an important component to speed up the process of improving their English-speaking skills.

The results of interviews with MAN 1 Medan English teachers provide additional perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the Fondi application. English teachers noted that this app has provided a significant impetus for students to more actively participate in English learning, especially in the context of classroom engagement and interaction. Despite this, teachers also identified that there is a need for further training for students so that they can maximize all the features available in the application. Teachers believe that with proper training, the full potential of the Fondi application can be optimized, so that students can more effectively utilize this technology for the development of their English language skills. As one teacher stated as follows:

"The Fondi app has the advantage of making English learning more interactive and interesting for students. Features such as live conversation and pronunciation practice are very helpful in improving their speaking skills. However, to maximize the potential of this app, I feel there is a need for further training for students and teachers about how to use all the features effectively. In the future, I hope there will be more intensive support in terms of training and development of features that can better meet students' learning needs." (Interview, IS, 2024)

Apart from the context above, the positive perception of MAN 1 Medan students towards the Fondi application can also be seen from the way they assess the effectiveness of this application in improving speaking skills. Students feel that the features in the app, such as pronunciation practice and live conversations, give them space to practice speaking English more confidently. MAN I Medan students said that these exercises were very helpful in improving their intonation, pronunciation and speaking fluency. This shows that the Fondi app not only facilitates passive learning, but also encourages active learning that has a direct impact on their communication skills.

Apart from improving speaking skills, students also realize the benefits of the Fondi app in expanding their English vocabulary. Through various interactive activities and challenges in the application, students indirectly learn new vocabulary in a relevant and authentic context. They feel that this method is more effective than more traditional vocabulary learning methods, such as memorizing lists of words. The Fondi app allows them to see and hear new words in real context, which helps them to more easily remember and use the vocabulary in everyday conversations.

At the end of the discussion, the author sees the role of the Fondi application in increasing student involvement in overall English learning. Students feel more motivated to continue learning and practicing, especially because of the gamification elements in the app that make learning feel like a game. The points, levels and challenges included in the app give them additional encouragement to keep practicing and achieving the targets they have set. Thus, the Fondi application not only functions as a learning aid, but also as an effective motivator in the English learning process at MAN 1 Medan.

Gamification in the Fondi Application to Improve Students' Speaking Skills

Gamification in the Fondi application has been proven to have a significant impact on improving students' English-speaking skills at MAN 1 Medan. Students who use this app consistently report that their self-confidence increases along with their willingness to participate in English conversations. Features such as challenges, points and levels offered in the Fondi application succeed in encouraging students' intrinsic motivation to continue practicing without feeling burdened by the learning process. These results show that gamification elements in learning are able to create a learning environment that is not only interesting but also effective in developing students' speaking skills.



Figure 1: Initial appearance of the Fondi application

Figure 1 above shows the initial view of the Fondi application which guides students through the process of personalizing their learning experience. When logging into the application, students are directed to select a profession, English learning needs, and language skill level that suits their profile. Each of these options automatically directs students to learning features equipped with interesting text and images, making the learning experience more relevant and enjoyable. This personalization approach allows applications to adapt learning materials according to user needs and preferences, increasing the effectiveness of the learning process through more customized and contextual methods.

In addition to the personalization features, students also really appreciate the competition and collaboration elements integrated into the Fondi app. This element allows students to learn in a more interactive way, where they can interact with fellow users, both peers and native speakers. Figure 2 shows how these features provide a more authentic and contextual learning experience, increasing student engagement in the English learning process. The social interaction established through competition and collaboration features not only enriches the learning experience but also provides encouragement for students to try harder to achieve their learning goals.

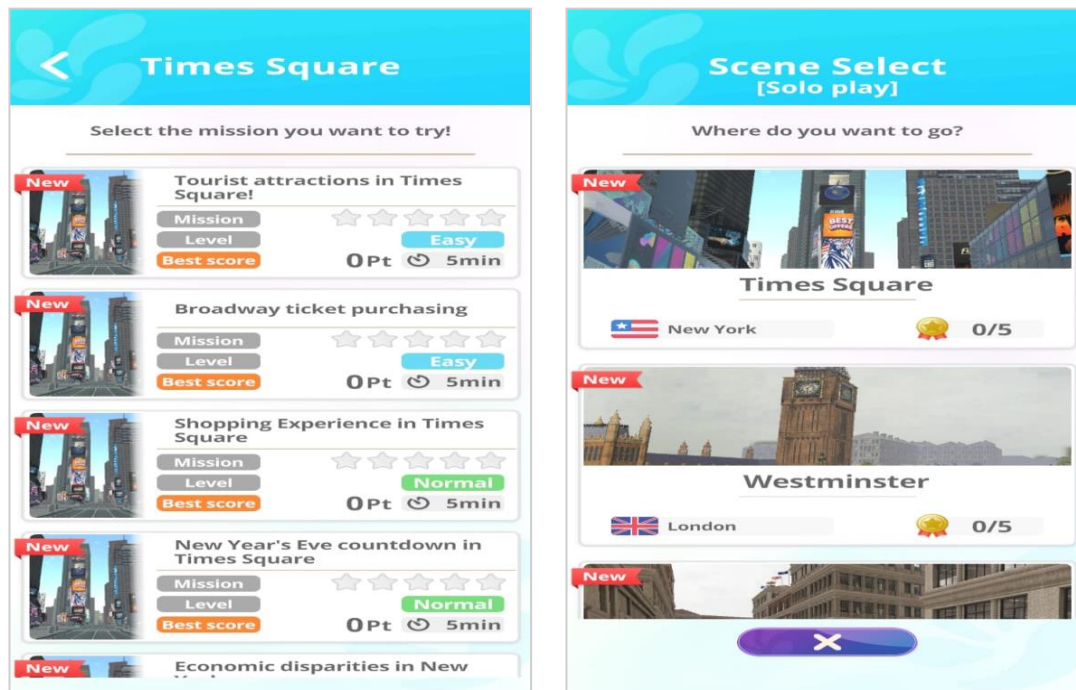


Figure 2: Display of Learning Material Features

After students select their learning needs and English skill level, the Fondi application directs them to the learning materials they need to study further, as seen in Figure 2. This application offers material recommendations tailored to the student's skill level, starting from the easiest to the most difficult. Each time students complete a particular problem or topic, they are given a score that reflects their performance. This score not only facilitates structured learning, but also integrates gamification elements that have been proven effective in increasing student motivation and engagement. Through this approach, Fondi creates a competitive yet fun learning environment, encouraging students to continue improving their skills in a gradual and sustainable manner.

Based on the discussion above, this study has direct implications for improving the English-speaking skills of MAN 1 Medan students. The author acknowledges that the complete features of the Fondi application, such as personalization of learning materials and gamification-based scoring, support the achievement of this goal. However, even though the Fondi application has shown many benefits, significant improvements and development are still needed to provide comfort and convenience for every user. This is important to do so that students can be more confident in using English in daily communication with the help of the Fondi application.

Discussion

The narrative above shows that the Fondi application has a positive effect in improving students' English learning experience at MAN 1 Medan. This is in line with previous research findings regarding the integration of technology in language education. As stated by Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, (2019), interactive and technology-based learning methods, such as speaking applications and pronunciation practice, can significantly increase students' motivation and language skills. This opinion is strengthened by the constructivism theory put forward by Piaget and Vygotsky in Devi, (2019), which states that active and contextual learning experiences help students build their knowledge more effectively.

The flexibility of applications that allow students to practice anytime and anywhere supports the principle of learning tailored to individual needs, as stated by Heil et al., (2016)

in the concept of technology-based learning. These findings confirm that technology, if applied appropriately, can increase student engagement and motivation in the English learning process, as well as provide practical solutions to cover the shortcomings of traditional methods. The application of flexible and adaptive technology can serve as an effective tool in meeting varied learning needs and supporting the development of better language skills.

However, some students reported technical challenges and difficulties in accessing certain features, especially when the internet connection was unstable. These technical difficulties are in accordance with research findings by Heil et al., (2016), which shows that technical obstacles such as connectivity problems are often the main barrier to the use of educational technology. As a result, the expected learning effectiveness from using applications such as Fondi can be disrupted, reducing students' motivation to continue learning. Therefore, there is a need for solutions to increase the stability and accessibility of technology so that it can support a more optimal learning experience.

Apart from that, using online applications in learning requires training for teachers and students in integrating technology into the curriculum effectively Dinc, (2019). This is also supported by Hsu et al. (2018), who found that effective technology training contributes to increasing digital competence and optimal use of technology in the learning process. So according to the author, without adequate training, the potential of technology in education, including gamification, will not be fully realized. Therefore, structured and ongoing training is key in ensuring that technology such as the Fondi app can be successfully integrated into English language learning.

Based on the explanation above, MAN 1 Medan teachers and students expressed the superiority of the Fondi application in supporting successful English learning. They highlighted that this application has high accessibility and visibility in learning English, in line with previous research results showing that application-based technology can increase student engagement in foreign language learning (He & Loewen, 2022). By integrating gamification into learning, the Fondi app not only makes the learning process more interesting but is also effective in motivating students to continue practicing and improving their English skills.

In line with previous research, Ritonga et al., (2022) emphasized that gamification elements can increase engagement and motivation in an educational context. This shows that an interactive and game-based learning approach can make the learning process more interesting and challenging for students. Research by Indra et al., (2023) shows that personalization in technology-based learning can increase student engagement and motivation. Furthermore, the interactive features with attractive text and images in the Fondi application are in line with research conducted by Arifiyana & Dzulfikri, (2023) which emphasizes the importance of using multimedia in learning to increase understanding and retention of information.

This is consistent with research findings from Putu Wulantari et al., (2023) which states that gamification can increase social interaction and collaboration between students, which in turn contributes to students' mastery of English speaking skills. The positive effects of gamification are also seen in research conducted by Sailer & Homner, (2020), which shows that gamification elements such as competition and collaboration can increase student motivation and engagement in learning. Wei, (2022) research results show that providing scores and direct feedback can improve student performance and motivation in a technology-based learning context. By providing gradual challenges and rewards in the form of scores, the Fondi application is able to create a competitive and fun learning environment, encouraging students to continuously improve their skills.

Apart from that, Fox & Calkins, (2003) also strengthen the opinion above which states that rewards and positive feedback can increase intrinsic motivation, making students more enthusiastic and involved in the learning process. Other research conducted by Putu Wulantari et al., (2023) confirmed that gamification in learning can increase student

engagement and motivation, but also emphasized the need for continuous development to overcome technical problems and ensure the relevance of the material to the needs of users, namely students. Thus, both studies show that although gamification and positive feedback can significantly motivate students, technical challenges and material relevance still require attention to maximize learning effectiveness.

Although this study provides the latest information about gamification in the Fondi application in a comprehensive manner, the author still has limitations that require refinement by future researchers or observers to enrich the literature on application-based English learning. The author recommends that future researchers analyze and explore the use of this application in various schools with diverse backgrounds, extend the duration of the study to obtain more comprehensive data, and collect longitudinal data to measure the long-term impact of using this application.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above findings, the conclusions are as the following that: 1). Students' perceptions of the Fondi application in learning English speaking are very positive, besides they feel more motivated and confident to participate in English conversations; 2). Gamification within the Fondi application significantly enhances students' speaking skills in a fun and interactive way. The findings of this study show that the Fondi application, with its gamification features, can create a learning environment that supports active student engagement and improves their English-speaking skills. Additionally, the social interaction and collaboration facilitated by this application enrich the students' learning experiences, providing them with opportunities to practice in a contextual manner. Therefore, the Fondi application not only improves linguistic skills but also helps students build confidence in using English directly.

These findings distinguish themselves from previous research by demonstrating how the gamification elements applied within the Fondi application, such as challenges, points, and levels, specifically have a positive effect on students' motivation and performance. Furthermore, the use of the application with competition and collaboration elements strengthens social interactions among students, contributing to the enhancement of their speaking skills. While prior studies have emphasized the importance of gamification in learning, this study provides more specific empirical evidence regarding the Fondi application and its use in the educational environment of Indonesia, particularly at MAN 1 Medan. This research underscores the need for continuous development and improvement of the Fondi application to address existing limitations, thereby becoming increasingly effective in supporting gamification-based English language learning.

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