



Ameliorating English speaking skill: students' voice on the use of byTALK application

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ABSTRACT

Speaking is a crucial skill in English learning but many students still struggle due to limited practice, low confidence, and lack of feedback. While various mobile applications support language learning, few offer real-time speaking practice, leaving a gap in tools that fully develop speaking competence. This study aimed to explore students' voices on the use of the byTALK application to ameliorate their English-speaking skills. A qualitative approach was employed through the use of narrative inquiry, involving four English Education students from a university in Pekalongan, Indonesia. Data were garnered through self-reflection and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed using Appraisal Theory, focusing on the Affect subsystem to examine emotional responses. The findings revealed both positive and negative voices. Students expressed happiness, motivation, and confidence as they improved in comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and fluency. However, they also experienced frustration, insecurity, and dissatisfaction due to limited internet access, absence of grammar and pronunciation support, and peer distractions. These findings highlight how byTALK fosters both linguistic growth and emotional engagement. This study suggests that byTALK can serve as an effective tool to support speaking skill development and promote learner autonomy in mobile assisted language learning contexts.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: July 12, 2025

Revised: November 11, 2025

Accepted: November 14, 2025

Keywords:

Speaking skill; byTALK application; Students' voice

To cite this article: Asyafina. M. (2025). Ameliorating English speaking skill: Students' voice on the use of byTALK application. *Erudita: Journal of English Language Teaching*, 5(2), 226–243. <https://doi.org/10.28918/erudita.v5i2.12295>

To link to this article: <https://e-journal.uingusdur.ac.id/erudita/article/view/erudita528>



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Introduction

Developing speaking skills is essential for effective English learning. However, it remains one of the most difficult for students to master due to its real-time nature, which demands immediate interaction and feedback (Pollard, 2008). Beyond grammar and vocabulary, speaking proficiency influences how individuals present themselves, build first impressions, and interact socially (Megawati, 2018). Many students struggle with speaking due to limited

English exposure, lack of daily practice, fear of making mistakes, and low motivation (Pollard, 2008). To overcome these difficulties, Chang et al. (2020) recommend focusing on meaningful communication and supportive learning environments. One effective approach is integrating technology through mobile applications, which provide regular practice, instant feedback, and authentic interaction opportunities.

The rise of mobile technology has led to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which integrates mobile devices for flexible and personalized instruction (Munday, 2017). Mobile devices such as smartphones are widely available, portable, and equipped with advanced features like voice recognition and interactive applications, making them ideal for language learning (Hsieh, 2024). According to Stockwell (2022), MALL bridges the gap between formal classroom learning and informal self-study by offering learners the flexibility to practice anytime and anywhere. MALL enhances motivation (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018) and promotes speaking practice in a low-stress, engaging environment that improves pronunciation and fluency over time.

Among various mobile applications, byTALK stands out for its focus on real-time speaking practice and feedback. Unlike Duolingo, which emphasizes structured exercises (Xiwen, 2024), or ELSA Speak, which specializes in pronunciation drills (Nushi & Sadeghi, 2021), byTALK gives learners a chance to practice speaking in real-life situations, helping them use the language in a natural way, and engage in meaningful communication. Its virtual speaking partner feature and interactive activities simulate real-world conversations, aligning with communicative language teaching principles (Lai & Gu, 2011). Hafifah (2019) found that Duolingo is effective for foundational language skills but is less effective for real-time interaction. Similarly, Alzatma (2020) emphasized the flexibility of mobile apps but noted a gap in tools promoting active speaking practice. byTALK fills this gap with instant feedback, personalized learning, and user-friendly design, motivating learners and fostering confidence in speaking. Despite its potential, research on byTALK as a MALL tool remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore students' experiences using byTALK to enhance speaking skills, contributing to a deeper understanding of innovative mobile learning applications in English language education.

Method

Research design

This research explored the use of the byTALK application, a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) tool designed to support English speaking development through real-time interaction. The application gained attention due to its potential in ameliorating language learning experiences through its interactive features and accessibility. The research employed a qualitative approach. A qualitative approach is a research method that explores human experiences, behaviors, and social phenomena by focusing on participants' subjective meanings. It emphasizes rich, detailed descriptions gathered through interviews, observations, and case studies to understand the complexities of social interactions and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2014). This approach enabled the researcher to gain a rich, nuanced understanding of how learners interacted with the byTALK application and how it influenced their language learning journey. In addition, the research employed narrative inquiry as its methodology, which focused on the personal stories and lived experiences of

participants (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This method was particularly well suited for capturing the individual experiences of language learners as they engaged with the application.

Research setting and participants

This study was conducted at a university in Pekalongan, where students in the English education program were enrolled in a Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) course. Technology Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) was a course designed to teach students how to use technology, such as mobile applications, to ameliorate their language skills. The participants consisted of four undergraduate students in the English education program of that university, two male and two female (aged 20–22). These participants were selected because they had experience using the byTALK application to practice their English-speaking skills and had joined in the TELL course as informed in Table 1. In addition, information about their personal data was kept confidential to protect their privacy.

Table 1

Demographic Data of the Participants

Name (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Description
Aron	Male	22	These participants were selected because they had experience using the byTALK application to practice their English-speaking skills, their willingness to share their personal learning stories, and represented gender equality to ensure a balanced perspective in the study.
Kenzo	Male	22	
Tessa	Female	20	
Maudy	Female	21	

Data collection

The researcher employed two qualitative instruments: self-reflection sheets and semi-structured interviews. The self-reflection sheets, similar to diaries, allowed participants to document their experiences and emotions after using the byTALK application. They submitted reflections twice a week over four weeks (February–March 2025), using either laptops or smartphones immediately after practice. This process encouraged continuous self-evaluation and provided rich insights into their affective responses toward language learning (Wiewiora & Kowalkiewicz, 2018). To complement the reflections, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain deeper understanding of participants' perspectives. This flexible method allowed open-ended questioning while maintaining focus on key topics (Creswell, 2014). Each participant was interviewed individually in March for about 40 minutes. All sessions were conducted in Indonesian to ensure comfort and authenticity (Papadopoulou & Vlachos, 2014), recorded, and later transcribed for accuracy. The combination of these instruments enhanced data richness and minimized misinterpretation.

Data analysis

After collecting the data, the interviews and self-reflection sheets were translated and transcribed from Indonesian to English. To analyze the data in more detail, this research used

a narrative inquiry approach, which focused on personal life stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) method to identify common patterns and themes, including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Data trustworthiness

To make sure the data in this study were accurate and reliable, the researcher used a triangulation method (Denzin, 1978; Patton, 1999). Method triangulation refers to the use of multiple data collection methods to study the same phenomenon (Polit & Beck, 2012). The data were collected through self-reflection sheets and semi-structured interviews. The self-reflection sheets were written by participants after using the byTALK application, giving personal views of their experiences and showing how they felt and learned while using the app. As Russell et al. (2005) explain, reflection sheets help participants express their ideas in their own words, offering deep insight into their learning process. The semi-structured interviews provided a more detailed exploration of participants' experiences and opinions. By comparing and checking the data from both sources, the researcher ensured that the findings accurately represented the participants' voices.

Findings and discussion

Students' positive voice using byTALK application in ameliorating English speaking skill

Happiness in expanding vocabulary through byTALK

Happiness referred to positive emotional states such as joy, enjoyment, delight, and pleasure. In this study, students expressed feelings of happiness as they engaged with vocabulary learning through the byTALK application. The process of discovering, remembering, and using new words in meaningful contexts, particularly through interactive activities, brought them a sense of enjoyment and excitement. Aron, in his interview, stated:

I like it when I find new words... (Aron, Interview, March 9, 2025).

His statement reflected clear emotional enjoyment. The phrase "I like it" indicated that Aron not only welcomed new vocabulary but also experienced happiness during the discovery process, showing that learning unfamiliar words sparked a joyful engagement. In his reflection, he wrote:

'Guess The Word' really helped me in learning new vocabulary and remembering the meaning of words (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 9, 2025).

The way he expressed "really helped me" showed not only usefulness but also his joy during the activity. The Guess the Word feature provided him with a fun and engaging experience in learning new words, making vocabulary expansion feel less like a burden and more like an enjoyable challenge, thus directly illustrating the affective state of happiness through meaningful interaction.

Maudy expressed both enjoyment when facing new vocabulary while using the application. She said:

I enjoy learning new words (Maudy, Interview, March 8, 2025).

The word “enjoy” clearly expressed her positive emotional response toward vocabulary learning. Her happiness emerged not from mastering the words, but from the pleasure of discovering them during conversation. This aligned with the happiness domain of Appraisal Theory, where the emotional reward came from the learning activity itself. The byTALK platform created a space where new vocabulary became a source of joyful engagement, rather than anxiety or pressure. In her reflection, she wrote that she wrote down new words and tried to use them later:

So, when I find new vocabulary in conversation. I usually write it down and then try to use it again. It's fun when I remember and use it correctly (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 21, 2025).

Maudy's reflection showed that happiness came from the process of remembering and using new vocabulary. When she stated “it was fun,” it indicated that learning and using new words through byTALK gave her a true feeling of joy. Her happiness did not only come from the results but also from the learning activity itself, demonstrating that byTALK helped students improve their speaking skills while also increasing their excitement to continue learning. The other student, Tessa shared:

I feel happy because it means I learned something new (Tessa, Interview, March 9, 2025).

The word “happy” showed a feeling of happiness; she enjoyed learning new vocabulary and felt good about gaining new words. This indicated that learning vocabulary through byTALK brought her positive emotion.

Kenzo shared his emotional response to vocabulary during his interview. He stated:

...happy because it increases my vocabulary... (Kenzo, Interview, March 8, 2025).

In the interview excerpt, the phrase “happy because it increased my vocabulary” reflected a clear expression of happiness, as he felt joy from gaining new words while using byTALK's features.

Satisfaction in developing speaking comprehension and grammar through byTALK

Satisfaction referred to positive emotional responses related to achievement, fulfillment, and engagement. In this study, students expressed satisfaction as they observed improvements in their speaking comprehension and grammar through consistent use of the byTALK application. Their reflections and interviews showed that regular interaction with the app helped them better understand spoken English and become more accurate in using grammatical structures, indicating that byTALK provided a meaningful and supportive environment for skill-building.

In Aron's interview, he stated:

But after a few practices, I started to get used to it and can grasp the message more quickly (Aron, Interview, March 9, 2025).

This statement reflected how Aron's comprehension improved through repeated practice using the app. The phrase “I started to get used to it and can grasp messages more quickly” showed a growing sense of satisfaction that emerged through consistent use of the byTALK application. His words indicated that repeated exposure helped him build familiarity and understanding. This emotional progression demonstrated the fulfillment of learning goals, which was central to satisfaction. He also wrote in his reflection:

I feel this app helps me in improving my comprehension because I have to understand the context quickly so I can communicate directly (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 8, 2025).

Aron further reinforced his emotional response of satisfaction by acknowledging the practical support provided by the byTALK application. The phrase "I feel this app helps me in improving my comprehension" revealed his recognition of progress and achievement in understanding spoken language. His reflection showed a sense of satisfaction because he saw how the app directly supported his ability to understand and communicate in English.

In another moment, Maudy in her reflection sheet, she wrote:

I felt better at understanding the questions... (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 22, 2025).

Although she did not explicitly label her emotion as satisfaction or excitement, the phrase "felt better" suggested a clear improvement in her comprehension. Her ability to understand questions more easily made her feel more successful, reflecting a growing sense of satisfaction with her listening and comprehension abilities when speaking in English.

In Kenzo's reflection sheet, he wrote:

I began to recognize patterns in the sentence questions, which improved my ability to understand what was being asked (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 28, 2025).

The phrase "I began to recognize patterns in the sentence questions" signaled growing satisfaction. He recognized sentence patterns that allowed him to interpret spoken questions more easily. The satisfaction he experienced came from realizing that he was no longer just guessing but actively applying knowledge gained through interaction. This recognition reflected cognitive and emotional growth, where understanding became clearer and more manageable through consistent use of the byTALK application.

In addition to comprehension, students also expressed satisfaction related to their grammar use. For example, Aron wrote:

I feel excited because I am starting to be able to use tenses more correctly, especially in making past and future sentences (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 23, 2025).

The phrase "I am starting to be able to use tenses more correctly" reflected Aron's pride in his developing grammatical accuracy. This progress marked a clear moment of satisfaction, as it resulted from repeated use of the byTALK application. His ability to construct past and future sentences more accurately indicated not only linguistic improvement but also emotional fulfillment through meaningful learning.

Maudy also expressed clear improvement:

From this feature, I am more aware of the sentence structure that I have been using so far... (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

Based on the underlined phrase, she felt satisfied with the byTALK "English Question" feature because it helped her notice her grammar mistakes more clearly. She became more aware of how she constructed sentences and started to realize which parts were still incorrect. The feature allowed her to correct mistakes immediately, and she used that moment to remember the correct form, preventing the same errors in the future. This demonstrated a good habit of self-monitoring and correcting work, which was important for learning.

Kenzo also reflected on his grammar progress:

I wanted to see if I had improved my understanding of grammar. And how grateful I was because I could answer the questions correctly... (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 15, 2025).

Kenzo's words clearly reflected satisfaction. He no longer saw grammar as a threat but as something manageable and rewarding. His ability to answer correctly gave him a sense of success, showing that his effort through byTALK practice had paid off.

Security in speaking fluency through byTALK

Security referred to students' feelings of confidence, comfort, and emotional safety while using English. In this study, students expressed that their fluency improved after regularly using the byTALK application. As a result, they felt more secure and less nervous when speaking. The ability to speak more smoothly and without hesitation gave them confidence to continue practicing, which made their speaking experience more comfortable and productive. Aron expressed his growing fluency and comfort in his reflection, he wrote:

Meanwhile, in Would You Rather, I have become more fluent in expressing my opinion (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 23, 2025).

The phrase "I have become more fluent" reflected a strong feeling of confidence. Aron felt more comfortable and less afraid to share his thoughts, showing a stronger emotional and linguistic control. The byTALK activities allowed him to express himself more freely without fear of making mistakes.

Maudy's experience reveals a similar emotional journey. In her reflection sheet, she wrote:

I am getting more confident in my fluency because in this session I can answer questions in "Would You Rather" without thinking much (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 22, 2025).

The phrase "I am getting more confident" highlighted growing security, as Maudy no longer hesitated or overthought when speaking. The phrase "without thinking much" suggested she felt emotionally safe and linguistically ready to respond spontaneously. This readiness to engage freely reflected both security and inclination, indicating that she was motivated to keep improving. The emotional transformation showed fluency shifting from a source of anxiety to a space of empowerment.

Tessa's fluency was closely tied to her emotional comfort. In her interview, she said:

Frequent practice and the courage to speak without being too afraid of making mistakes really helps (Tessa, Interview, March 9, 2025).

Her focus on "courage" and "not being too afraid" pointed to important emotional factors, namely security, indicating that she felt less fear and more confidence to speak up even when there was a possibility of making mistakes. This suggested that emotional readiness played a key role in her fluency improvement, not just knowledge or practice. Tessa also reflected on her comfort in speaking fluently, writing:

I am not so nervous when speaking and can answer more fluently although not as fast as a native speaker (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 23, 2025).

The phrase "not so nervous" demonstrated that her confidence had increased. She felt secure in her speaking performance, even if it was not yet perfect. This security helped her

communicate more comfortably during byTALK activities, which encouraged direct English interaction with learning partners, many of whom were foreigners.

Kenzo's description similarly highlights fluency connected with positive emotions. He said:

I can speak more spontaneously without having to think for long (Kenzo, Interview, March 8, 2025).

Kenzo's statement showed clear emotional security. He spoke naturally and confidently, without long pauses. This spontaneous speaking reflected a strong sense of comfort while using the app. He no longer overthought his words, showing that fluency had improved and anxiety had decreased. In his reflection, he wrote:

My fluency has improved quite significantly, especially with the regular practice of Talk About Topics and Brain Questions (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, March 1, 2025).

The mention of "regular practice of Talk About Topics and Brain Questions" suggested that the structured and consistent features of byTALK provided Kenzo with a stable and supportive environment to develop his fluency. Engaging regularly with these activities allowed him to practice speaking in a familiar and low-pressure setting, which gradually reduced hesitation and fear of making mistakes. This exposure helped build his confidence, as he monitored his own progress over time. As his fluency improved, so did his belief in his ability to express ideas clearly and spontaneously. This development led to a stronger sense of emotional security, where he no longer felt anxious or uncertain during speaking tasks.

Inclination in pronunciation through byTALK

Inclination referred to emotional responses such as interest, desire, and willingness to act. In this study, several students expressed strong inclination toward improving their pronunciation skills through regular use of the byTALK application. Their statements revealed growing motivation and active effort to pronounce English words more clearly and correctly. Features in byTALK that involved verbal interaction, imitation, and speaking tasks encouraged learners to become more aware of their pronunciation and motivated them to practice it consistently. Aron shared about pronunciation progress in his reflection sheet he wrote:

But I will try by listening to the person I am talking to in this application and listening to native speakers (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

Aron expressed an active intention to learn through listening, which indicated emotional inclination. His decision to keep trying and to model pronunciation from others reflected a strong motivation to learn through byTALK. He enjoyed the process and was motivated to improve.

Similarly, Maudy demonstrated interest in adjusting her pronunciation through frequent exposure, she said:

Yes, I am more aware of the correct pronunciation because I often hear the person I am talking to say a word with the same pronunciation over and over (Maudy, Interview, March 8, 2025).

The phrase "more aware," along with her attention to repeated pronunciation, indicated a cognitive shift toward active listening and self-correction. This suggested that she was not

passively absorbing language but actively engaging with spoken input to improve her pronunciation. In her reflection, she wrote:

Even though there is no special pronunciation feature, I think my speaking becomes clearer because I try to imitate the way my partner talks (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 28, 2025).

This statement showed that Maudy took an active role in improving her pronunciation by observing her partners and imitating them. Her effort demonstrated a strong sense of inclination, as she was motivated to adjust and refine her pronunciation through practice.

Tessa demonstrated interest in improving her pronunciation through frequent exposure. She wrote:

I realized I used to say "hour" with too many syllables, and after hearing it correctly, I tried to change it (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

Tessa said "I tried to change it," which clearly showed her willingness and initiative to adjust her pronunciation after recognizing a mistake. Her reflection revealed a shift from passive learning to active self-correction, a key indicator of inclination. The fact that she was able to identify an error, listen attentively, and attempt to revise it demonstrated a genuine desire to improve. This self-driven effort, supported by her engagement with byTALK, highlighted how the app encouraged learners to become more conscious of and invested in their pronunciation development.

Another student, Kenzo expressed how feedback from misunderstandings shaped his awareness:

There is no special feature ... But, it makes me figure out if my pronunciation is not right, I will fix it (Kenzo, Interview, March 8, 2025).

This statement reflected Kenzo's motivation and willingness to take responsibility for his own pronunciation improvement. Although the application did not provide direct correction, his awareness of incorrect pronunciation and his readiness to fix it showed a strong internal drive to improve. His statement "I will fix it" indicated not only awareness but also action, aligning closely with the inclination category. Kenzo's self-initiated effort demonstrated that byTALK encouraged active learning behaviors, where students independently monitored and improved their speaking performance. This willingness was further validated in his reflection sheet, where he shared:

I know, there is no feature that focuses on pronunciation but I find it (the application) helpful because at least I can compare my pronunciation with my partner and immediately correct it when it feels wrong (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 15, 2025).

This statement supported his earlier interview by showing how peer interaction in byTALK became a resource for self-correction. Even without formal guidance, Kenzo used real-time communication as an opportunity to compare and adjust his pronunciation, just like Aron, Maudy, and Tessa. Their proactive behaviors of listening, comparing, and correcting demonstrated strong inclination and reinforced that byTALK promoted active self-regulated learning. The consistent motivation to monitor and improve his pronunciation reflected meaningful engagement with the app's interactive environment.

Informed in the first theme, the findings reveal that students experienced four core positive emotions while using the byTALK application: happiness in learning vocabulary, satisfaction in improving comprehension and grammar, security in developing fluency, and

inclination to enhance pronunciation. These affective responses illustrate that emotion plays a crucial role in supporting learners' cognitive and communicative development in speaking. In line with Martin and White's (2005) affect subsystem, these emotions reflect happiness, satisfaction, security, and inclination, showing that byTALK provides both linguistic and emotional benefits within a MALL environment.

Students felt happy when learning vocabulary through the gamified "Guess the Word" feature, which made learning enjoyable and motivating. Their joy stemmed not only from fun activities but also from mastering and applying new words. This aligns with the happiness category of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) and supports Hafifah's (2019) finding that gamified learning fosters engagement in a stress-free environment. Such interactive features sustain learners' motivation and autonomy, creating positive conditions for vocabulary growth.

Students also expressed satisfaction as they enhanced comprehension and grammar accuracy through features like "English Question" and "Talk About Topics." Their satisfaction was tied to noticing personal progress and improved confidence in constructing sentences. This aligns with the satisfaction domain in Appraisal Theory and resonates with Mustafidah (2023), who found that speaking platforms strengthen grammatical awareness and self-assurance. The results indicate that structured yet spontaneous speaking tasks effectively help learners internalize grammar in authentic communication.

A sense of security emerged as students became more fluent and less anxious when speaking. The app's semi-anonymous and low-pressure environment reduced fear of judgment, allowing students to experiment freely. This reflects the Security domain (Martin & White, 2005) and agrees with Bawanti and Arifani's (2021) study, which emphasized that psychologically safe spaces promote speaking confidence. Such design aspects encourage risk-taking and sustained fluency practice.

In other words, these findings emphasize that positive emotions such as joy, satisfaction, and confidence play a significant role in enhancing learners' engagement and persistence in language learning. Students who experience happiness and enjoyment during vocabulary and speaking activities are more likely to participate actively and retain new knowledge. Therefore, teachers and developers should consider emotional design in language learning tools, ensuring that features not only facilitate skill practice but also nurture students' motivation, comfort, and autonomy. Incorporating interactive and meaningful activities, such as those in the byTALK application, can transform learning from a routine task into a positive and rewarding experience. By fostering a supportive and enjoyable learning environment, educators can help learners sustain interest, build self-efficacy, and achieve more effective language development over time.

Students' negative voice using byTALK application in fostering English speaking skill

Unhappiness due to limited access when practicing speaking through byTALK

Unhappiness referred to negative emotional states such as sadness and disappointment. In the context of language learning, unhappiness arose when learners faced obstacles that hindered their ability to participate or progress. In this study, several participants reported emotional sadness and dissatisfaction when their access to byTALK became restricted, either

due to a shift from free to paid features or unstable internet connections. These limitations made it difficult for them to practice speaking consistently, resulting in emotional setbacks.

Aron expressed his disappointment in the interview when he described how the application's access limitations interfered with his speaking practice:

My complaint lately has been the difficulty in connecting with other online partners because my account is not premium and now the application is paid unlike before (Aron, Interview, March 9, 2025).

The word "complaint" indicated a negative emotional state, revealing that Aron was not simply reporting a technical issue, but expressing personal disappointment. His reference to "unlike before" emphasized a sense of loss, as he contrasted his previous freedom to use the app with the current limitations. This highlighted a shift from satisfaction to sadness. His emotional response aligned with the category of unhappiness, as it reflected the feeling of being let down by an unexpected change that took away a valued part of his learning experience. He also shared his unhappiness in his reflection sheet:

I am very happy to be able to play this application, but for some reason now this application has become paid... I was very impressed with this free application, but suddenly had to pay to use it (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 8, 2025).

At first, the phrase "very happy" reflected Aron's initial positive emotional state, indicating that he genuinely enjoyed using the byTALK application when it was free. However, the shift in tone began with the expressions "but for some reason now this application has become paid" and "suddenly had to pay," which signaled a strong sense of unhappiness. These phrases revealed his emotional reaction; he felt surprised, confused, and let down by the unexpected change. His disappointment was not rooted in the learning content, but in the loss of free access that previously supported his speaking development. This emotional shift illustrated a clear case of unhappiness, where the sadness stemmed from external changes that disrupted a previously enjoyable experience.

Kenzo also showed mixed emotions about the app's changes. He said:

The challenges are... the network that sometimes errors... and it seems that this application is paid, not free like before (Kenzo, Interview, March 8, 2025).

The word "errors" highlighted his feeling of unhappiness because the unstable network made his learning experience difficult. The phrase "paid, not free like before" showed disappointment because he missed the previous, more accessible version. In his reflection, Kenzo expressed this feeling even more strongly:

I understand that the app needs to grow and probably needs funding to keep it going, but this change is a bit disappointing because I felt like I was making good progress and now my access is limited (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 22, 2025).

Kenzo's reflection showed that he felt sad and disappointed about the changes in the byTALK app. Even though he understood that the application needed money to keep running, he still said the change was "a bit disappointing." This showed that he was emotionally affected by losing free access. He also said that he had been making good progress, but now his access was limited. This made him feel unhappy because something that helped him learn was suddenly taken away.

Maudy, while generally positive, also expressed discomfort with the app's monetization. In her interview, she stated:

... plus the application is suddenly paid (Maudy, Interview, March 8, 2025).

Maudy's short statement showed that she felt unhappy about the sudden change in the byTALK. The word "suddenly" suggested that she was not prepared for the change, and it made her feel emotionally surprised and disappointed. Initially, she was able to use the app freely, but now she had to pay for it. This change came from an external situation that took away something helpful and caused her to feel sad and disappointed.

Tessa, in her reflection sheet, also revealed a feeling of sadness. She wrote:

I don't know what the reason is but the application has become paid... this really makes me sad, *hiks* (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 23, 2025).

The words "made me sad" expressed a clear feeling of unhappiness, and the interjection "*hiks*," like a sob or sigh, added a very personal and emotional expression of disappointment. This showed she felt strongly upset because she lost free access in byTALK.

Dissatisfaction due to the lack of grammar support in byTALK

Dissatisfaction was an emotional response related to unmet expectations or unfulfilled needs in achieving a goal. In language learning, this feeling arose when students were eager to improve, but the learning tools did not provide the support they required. In this study, some participants expressed dissatisfaction with the byTALK application because it did not offer grammar explanations or corrections. Even though the app had a feature called "English Question" that gave tense-related questions, the students still felt it lacked the guidance they needed to improve their grammatical accuracy. For example, Aron wrote in his reflection sheet:

I feel my grammar is still messy because there is no explanation in this app (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 15, 2025).

This shows that Aron was unhappy with his grammar and felt the app did not help him fix it. He expected grammar support, but he could not find it, so he felt frustrated with his progress. Kenzo had a similar feeling. He said:

I often feel confused whether the sentence I make is grammatically correct or not, because there is no correction given (Kenzo, Interview, February 15, 2025).

Kenzo felt unsure if his sentences were correct. He wanted feedback to help him learn, but the app did not provide it. This made him feel dissatisfied, because he was trying to learn but did not get enough help.

Similarly, Tessa admitted in her interview:

But the features in byTALK don't provide discussion or explanation about the answer (Tessa, Interview, March 9, 2025).

This statement shows that Tessa expected grammar support in the form of feedback or clarification. However, the app only gave questions without explaining the reasons behind the correct answers. This lack of explanation left her with unanswered questions, which led to dissatisfaction. In her reflection sheet, she further stated:

I tried to talk more about tenses with my online partner, but because we were both students who didn't really master grammar, we were confused (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

This statement shows that Tessa wanted to learn grammar through speaking practice. She tried to use tenses more often during conversations. However, since both she and her partner lacked grammar knowledge, they ended up feeling confused. The app did not offer any grammar support to help them. Because of this, Tessa felt dissatisfied, she had the motivation to improve, but the app did not provide the help she needed.

Insecurity while practicing pronunciation through byTALK

Insecurity referred to negative emotion that appeared when someone felt unsure, unconfident, or afraid of making mistakes. In speaking, especially in pronunciation, this feeling arose when students did not receive enough help or correction. Insecurity belonged to the Affect system and was triggered when learners felt uncertain about their ability or the tools they used. In this study, students often felt insecure because the byTALK application did not provide a special feature to support pronunciation learning. As a result, they had to depend on themselves or their speaking partners to know if their pronunciation was correct.

As Aron said:

Unfortunately, there is no special pronunciation feature. Gladly, sometimes my online partner gives me directions if my pronunciation is wrong (Aron, Interview, March 9, 2025).

The word “unfortunately” showed his disappointment, while the phrase “no special pronunciation feature” reflected his awareness of a missing support. His reliance on his partner indicated that he could not depend on the app itself, which made him feel uncertain. This led to insecurity, because he had to guess or wait for others to correct him. In his reflection sheet, he wrote:

I’m still unsure about my pronunciation... but I will try by listening to the person I’m talking to and to native speakers (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

The phrase “still unsure” clearly showed insecurity. Aron did not feel confident about his pronunciation, and he had no feedback from the app to confirm whether he was speaking correctly. This uncertainty showed emotional discomfort and hesitation in pronunciation practice.

Kenzo experienced a similar feeling in his interview, he shared:

...By having a conversation directly can help me hear the pronunciation of the partner so that I will compare it with the pronunciation that I say whether it is correct or not... (Aron, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

The phrase “whether it was correct or not” showed that Kenzo was unsure about how he pronounced words. This lack of certainty was a sign of insecurity, because he did not know if what he said was correct unless he compared it with others. In Kenzo’s reflection, he wrote:

I know, if there is no feature that I can focus on but I feel helped but at least I can compare my pronunciation with my partner’s and fix it immediately when it feels wrong (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 15, 2025).

This showed he made extra effort to check and fix his pronunciation. However, the phrase “when it felt wrong” still showed doubt. He had to trust his feelings, not the app’s correction. This ongoing uncertainty was another form of insecurity, as he lacked confidence in his own ability. Tessa also showed her insecurity in her reflection sheet:

I realize that my pronunciation not really good, for example I used to say ‘hour’ like ‘how-er’ with an extra sound (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

The phrase "not really good" and the example of mispronunciation reflected her self-doubt. She became aware of her mistake, but it was not because the app corrected her; it was through her own effort. This awareness without support made her feel insecure about her pronunciation.

Disinclination to engage in speaking activities due to disruptive peer interactions

Disinclination referred to a negative emotional response where students became unwilling or unmotivated to continue an activity. This occurred when learners faced repeated discouraging experiences, making them avoid future engagement. In this study, students reported disinclination when they encountered disruptive peer behavior while using byTALK. Their speaking partners often failed to focus, gave poor responses, or treated the session like casual chatting. These experiences reduced students' emotional comfort and made them less interested in continuing the speaking practice.

Aron in his reflection sheet, he wrote:

There are moments when I want to continue the conversation, but my partner gives one-word answers or just laughs. It ruins the learning atmosphere (Aron, Reflection-sheet, February 16, 2025).

Aron's statement showed his initial motivation through "I wanted to continue the conversation," but the partner's minimal and inappropriate responses discouraged him. The phrase "ruined the learning atmosphere" clearly reflected disinclination, as the environment no longer felt productive or supportive.

Maudy also experienced similar distractions. In her interview, she said:

There are also partners who don't focus on studying and even talk about personal matters, there aren't many, but there are quite a few partners like that (Maudy, Interview, March 8, 2025).

This statement showed that Maudy felt let down by peers who didn't treat the session seriously. She expected focused learning but received off-topic responses. This mismatch between expectation and reality lowered her interest in continuing her learning speaking. In her reflection, she said:

Sometimes I meet partners who treat it like social media, not a language learning app. It makes me feel uncomfortable (Maudy, Reflection sheet, February 16, 2025).

The phrase "not a language learning app" showed that Maudy felt the learning goal was being ignored. Her discomfort pointed to insecurity, and over time, this could lead to disinclination, avoiding future practice because it no longer felt useful.

Kenzo, in his reflection sheet, he wrote:

I started to get frustrated because sometimes I had to read the question more than once to really understand it. Especially when my partner doesn't really answer or just says 'yes' and 'no', I lose interest (Kenzo, Reflection sheet, February 14, 2025).

Kenzo's statement "I lost interest" was a clear example of disinclination. The partner's short and unhelpful replies made him feel that the conversation was not meaningful. As a result, he lost motivation to continue practicing.

Tessa also felt distracted when conversations went off-topic. During her interview, she noted:

Sometimes it's hard to practice when my partner talks about random things not related to the topic. I try to bring it back, but it gets tiring (Tessa, Interview, March 9, 2025).

Tessa's efforts to "bring it back" showed her commitment, but the word "tiring" revealed emotional exhaustion. She became discouraged from always fixing the conversation alone, leading to a reduced desire to engage. In her reflection, she wrote:

I want to use the app to improve speaking, not just to chat casually. When partners don't take it seriously, it's frustrating (Tessa, Reflection sheet, February 22, 2025).

This statement showed that Tessa had a clear goal to improve her speaking skills through meaningful practice. However, her speaking partners did not show the same seriousness and instead treated the session as casual chatting. This lack of alignment between her purpose and her partners' behavior made her feel frustrated. Over time, this frustration led to disinclination, as she felt emotionally tired and less motivated to continue using the app. Her response reflected a loss of interest caused by repeated negative experiences.

Based on the second theme, the study findings also demonstrate that byTALK caused several negative emotional reactions linked to limited access, lack of grammar support, pronunciation difficulties, and uncooperative peers. These responses, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, insecurity, and lack of motivation, correspond to Martin and White's (2005) affect categories of unhappiness, dissatisfaction, and insecurity. Students felt unhappy when unable to access certain features due to payment restrictions or unstable internet, reducing their enthusiasm for learning. This finding echoes Pebiana and Febria (2023), who noted that financial and technical barriers diminish motivation. Ensuring equitable and stable access is thus essential to sustain engagement.

Feelings of dissatisfaction arose from the lack of grammar explanations, leaving students unsure about sentence correctness. This aligns with the Dis/Satisfaction domain of Appraisal Theory and Xu's (2020) argument that effective MALL tools should integrate both practice and instructional feedback. Without grammar support, learners risk fossilizing errors and losing confidence. Students also experienced insecurity about pronunciation due to the absence of feedback tools, leading to hesitation and anxiety consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986) and Bawanti and Arifani (2021), who emphasized the importance of pronunciation support in lowering language anxiety. Integrating corrective feedback could thus enhance both accuracy and confidence.

Lastly, peer interaction problems, such as off-topic or unserious partners, caused frustration and a loss of motivation, echoing Hafifah's (2019) finding that poor digital interactions can reduce learning focus. Emotional barriers such as frustration, confusion, and insecurity can hinder learning progress, highlighting the importance of addressing both cognitive and affective dimensions. Platforms should therefore encourage responsible participation, align users based on shared goals, enhance accessibility, and integrate grammar and pronunciation aids. At the same time, teachers should provide guidance and emotional support to help learners navigate challenges. By addressing these factors together, a more effective and motivating environment for English speaking development can be created, enabling students to maintain engagement, build confidence, and achieve better learning outcomes.

Conclusion

The present study showcases that the byTALK application helps students improve their English-speaking skills by giving them a supportive and fun learning experience. Students felt happy when learning new words with the "Guess the Word" feature, satisfied when they understood spoken English and used grammar better with "English Question" and "Talk About Topics," confident when speaking more smoothly, and motivated to practice pronunciation by listening and copying others. These positive feelings made them more active, consistent, and interested in learning English. However, some problems slowed their progress, such as limited access to features because of payment or internet issues, no clear grammar explanation, lack of pronunciation feedback, and partners who were not serious, which caused sadness, worry, and frustration. Despite these problems, students tried to improve by practicing regularly, self-correcting, and focusing on real communication. The study implies that the byTALK application is an effective tool for enhancing English speaking skills by fostering positive affective responses, such as happiness in vocabulary, satisfaction in comprehension/grammar, confidence in fluency, and motivation in pronunciation, which are crucial for sustained learning and skill development.

However, the study's scope was limited by the challenges students encountered, serving as implicit limitations: limited access due to payment restrictions or unstable internet, the lack of clear grammar explanations and pronunciation feedback within the app, and unserious or distracting peer partners. To address these issues, the findings recommend that future research and development focus on enhancing the application's features to include specific, accessible grammar and pronunciation aids and implementing mechanisms to encourage focused user participation. Furthermore, educators should provide necessary guidance and emotional support to help learners navigate the technical and social challenges inherent in mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) environments.

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