Indonesian EFL students' views on using the cambly application to improve speaking skills

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Cambly in improving the speaking abilities of high school students in Indonesia and to gather their perspectives on the app's usability and impact. A mixed-methods approach was used, with a sample group of 12 students who participated in one-on-one Cambly sessions over four weeks. Data was collected through pre- and post-tests measuring speaking proficiency, as well as surveys and interviews assessing user satisfaction and perceived improvements. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' speaking proficiency, with most participants reporting increased confidence and better pronunciation. However, challenges such as internet connectivity issues and subscription costs were noted. The findings suggest that Cambly can be an effective supplement to traditional English teaching methods, offering personalized and interactive language practice. Implications include the potential for schools to integrate Cambly into their language programs, with an emphasis on ensuring affordable access to digital learning tools. Future research should focus on the long-term effects of Cambly and compare its effectiveness to other language-learning platforms.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, English proficiency is no longer merely an advantage but a necessity for effective international communication. Advances in technology have transformed language learning, with digital platforms enabling interactive and accessible language practice regardless of geographical boundaries (Kumar, 2022). Among these platforms, Cambly offers a unique learning experience by providing real-time, one-on-one interaction with native English speakers from around the world, making it an attractive option for learners seeking to improve their speaking skills.

In Indonesia, English is classified as a foreign language (EFL), and while it is understood by many, relatively few use it actively in daily communication. This limited usage often stems from a lack of confidence, insufficient vocabulary, and fear of mispronunciation. As (Mahmudah & Daulay, 2024) emphasize, the key to developing speaking ability lies not solely in vocabulary mastery but in the willingness to speak bravely. Encouraging learners to integrate English speaking into daily activities can help overcome psychological barriers. Therefore, this study aims to explore Indonesian EFL students' perceptions of using the Cambly application as a tool to enhance their speaking confidence and competence.

This study focuses on Cambly due to its growing popularity and innovative approach, but also due to its innovative approach to language learning. Unlike traditional methods that rely heavily on memorization and passive learning, Cambly emphasizes conversation-based practice, allowing learners to build confidence, fluency, and real-life communication skills through direct engagement. This method aligns closely with current educational paradigms that highlight learner autonomy, practical usage, and personalized instruction (Maryono & Budiono, 2020).

Furthermore, Cambly's accessibility and flexible features cater to a wide range of learners, from beginners to advanced users, making it an inclusive platform for English language development (Pendidikan et al., 2024). As someone who deeply values the role of technology in education, I believe that investigating the effectiveness and user experience of Cambly can offer meaningful insights into the future of language learning - especially in regions where opportunities for practicing English with native speakers are limited. Ultimately, my decision to research Cambly stems from a desire to explore how digital tools like this can empower learners, reshape language education, and provide practical solutions to linguistic barriers in a digitally connected era.

English proficiency has become increasingly important in Indonesia as globalization continues to expand. The ability to communicate fluently in English is not only a key skill for international collaboration but also an essential requirement for career advancement in many sectors (Qawaqneh et al., 2023). Among the four main language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - speaking plays a crucial role in real-world communication (Azizah, 2022). Despite this importance, Indonesian high school students often struggle to develop their speaking skills due to limited opportunities for practice in traditional classroom settings (Jeong, 2022). These limitations hinder students' ability to express themselves effectively in English and reduce their competitiveness on a global scale.

The challenges Indonesian students face in mastering speaking skills are rooted in several factors (Nasution et al., 2024). Traditional teaching methods in most schools prioritize grammar and reading comprehension, often at the expense of speaking and listening practice. Classes are typically large, leaving little room for personalized interaction or conversational practice (Nematov et al., 2022). Moreover, the lack of exposure to native English speakers and real-life speaking scenarios further hampers students' ability to build confidence and fluency in the language. This issue underscores the need for innovative approaches to English education, particularly in incorporating technology to provide more dynamic learning environments (Sholekhah & Fakhrurriana, 2023).

One potential solution lies in the use of digital language-learning applications such as Cambly. Cambly offers interactive one-on-one tutoring sessions with native English speakers, which can help bridge the gap in speaking practice (Manik et al., 2024). Unlike traditional classroom methods, Cambly allows students to receive immediate feedback on their pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary in real time. These features make Cambly an attractive tool for enhancing speaking proficiency, particularly for students who lack access to other resources. However, its effectiveness in improving

the speaking skills of Indonesian high school students has yet to be thoroughly examined.

The current study aims to explore how the Cambly application can enhance the speaking abilities of Indonesian high school students. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate improvements in students' fluency, pronunciation, and overall confidence after using the app. Additionally, the study examines students' perceptions of Cambly's usability and effectiveness as a learning tool. Understanding these perspectives is critical for determining whether digital applications like Cambly can serve as viable supplements to traditional English education in Indonesia.

This research is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the use of technology in language learning. By focusing on Cambly, the study highlights how interactive digital platforms can address specific gaps in traditional teaching methods (Daulay et al., 2019). Second, the findings can inform policymakers and educators about the potential benefits of integrating such tools into school curricula. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for schools to adopt innovative teaching strategies that align with the technological advancements and global demands of the 21st century (Ali et al., 2023).

Encouraging the adoption of technology in English education has broader implications for the Indonesian education system. As schools increasingly recognize the importance of preparing students for global challenges, they must also invest in tools and methodologies that foster practical communication skills (Dilnoza & Sevara, 2024). Digital applications like Cambly can play a pivotal role in this process, providing students with access to resources that were previously unavailable. However, the successful implementation of these tools requires careful planning, including considerations of cost, accessibility, and teacher training. the integration of digital platforms such as Cambly into English education presents a promising avenue for addressing the challenges faced by Indonesian high school students (Daulay et al., 2023). By providing personalized, real-time speaking practice, Cambly has the potential to significantly enhance students' speaking proficiency and confidence. The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for further research into the role of technology in language learning, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective teaching strategies in Indonesia (Akrim, 2022).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the Cambly application on improving speaking abilities among high school students in Indonesia. The mixed-methods approach was selected to capture both measurable improvements in students' speaking skills and deeper insights into their personal experiences and perceptions of using Cambly as a learning tool (Fariq et al., 2022). Quantitative methods were employed to analyze pre-test and post-test results, providing statistical evidence of changes in proficiency. In parallel, qualitative methods, such as surveys and semi-structured interviews, explored participants' perspectives on the application's usability, challenges encountered, and overall effectiveness. This dual approach ensured a holistic view of Cambly's potential as an educational tool (Abdillah et al., 2021).

The participants of this study consisted of 12 Indonesian high school students representing diverse demographics in terms of geographical location, English proficiency levels, and access to technology. A purposive sampling technique was used to recruit students who were interested in improving their English-speaking skills and willing to actively use Cambly during the study period. Selection criteria included access to a reliable internet connection, availability of a device compatible with the Cambly application, and a basic level of English proficiency to ensure active engagement with

native-speaking tutors. Efforts were made to include students from both urban and rural areas to examine the broader applicability of Cambly across different educational contexts in Indonesia.

Quantitative data were collected through a structured speaking test administered before and after the intervention. The test was designed based on the IELTS Speaking Band Descriptors, assessing fluency, coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation. Participants engaged in a 10–15 minute speaking session with an English teacher who acted as an independent rater. For qualitative data, online surveys and semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather students' feedback on their learning experiences, perceived improvements, and challenges while using Cambly. All qualitative sessions were recorded with consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to determine the significance of improvements in speaking scores. For qualitative data, thematic analysis was employed, following (Braun, 2020) six-step framework: familiarization with data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Coding was conducted manually by two independent researchers to ensure inter-coder reliability, and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. This combined analytical approach provided both empirical evidence and nuanced insights into the impact of Cambly on students' speaking proficiency.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Quantitative Results: Pre-and Post-Test Perfomance

The results of this study indicated a significant improvement in speaking and post-test scores showed a marked increase in key areas such as fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The average pre-test score across all participants was 65.3 out of 100, while the average post-test score increased to 78.6, representing a 20.4% improvement. Paired t-tests confirmed that this increase was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), underscoring the effectiveness of Cambly in enhancing students' speaking abilities. Notably, the greatest improvement was observed in pronunciation, with students demonstrating increased clarity and confidence in articulating words.

The findings of this study are presented in two main sections: quantitative results from the pre-test and post-test, and qualitative insights from interviews and surveys. This organization follows the indicators assessed fluency and coherence, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and pronunciation allowing for a clearer interpretation of Cambly's impact on students' speaking abilities. The combination of numerical evidence and participant narratives provides a more nuanced understanding of the learning process, aligning with the argument that technology-based tools can facilitate both skill improvement and learner motivation (Warschauer & Liaw, 2019).

3.2 Qualitative Insights: Student's Experience with Cambly

To complement these quantitative improvements, in-depth interviews were conducted to capture students' personal experiences while using Cambly. The following table summarizes selected responses from participants that highlight their reflections on speaking improvement, confidence, and usage challenges during the four-week program.

Table 1 Students' Perceptions of the Cambly Application

No	Statements	Learning Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The Cambly application is easy to use for novice users.	50%	33.3%	16.7%	0%	0%
2	The appearance of the Cambly	41.7%	41.7%	16.6%	0%	0%

	application is attractive and easy to understand.					
3	I find the Cambly app reliable in daily use.	45.8%	29.2%	25%	0%	0%
4	The Cambly app makes me more confident in speaking English with many people.	37.5%	50%	8.3%	4.2%	0%
5	I feel that the Cambly application is very relevant	41.7%	33.3%	25%	0%	0%

Based on the questionnaire results, students' perceptions of the Cambly application are generally positive. Regarding the first statement on the ease of use for novice users, 50% of respondents strongly agreed, and 33.3% agreed, while 16.7% remained neutral. No respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that most students found Cambly, continence, simplicity, and flexible even for beginners.

3.3 Convinence

The fisrt statement with student 1, focused on the application's visual appeal and ease of that have been. This indicates that most students found the Cambly interface attractive and intuitive. Thus, the majority of students perceived Cambly's user interface as attractive and easy to understand, providing a convenient and intuitive learning experience. One of the aspects of convenience evaluated by the students in using the Cambly application is its accessibility and ease of use, especially for beginners who are just starting to speak with native English speakers.

The data above is supported by interviews that have been conducted by student,the result of the interview are as follow: "In my opinion, Cambly is very helpful because it's easy to use even for those who are just starting to speak with native speakers." (S1.

3.4 Accessibility

For the second statement concerning the application's reliability in daily use, The second statement addressed the impact of Cambly on students' confidence in speaking English. These results suggest that Cambly has a positive effect on students' self-confidence when speaking English.

The data above is supported by interviews that have been conducted by student,the result of the interviews are as follows: "I became more confident speaking with foreigners after regularly practicing on Cambly." (S4) "I think the materials and learning style are well-suited to my needs as a student trying to improve my speaking skills." (S7)

Finally, the fifth statement with student 4 and 7 highlighted the relevance of Cambly to students' learning needs. No disagreement was recorded, showing that the application is perceived as relevant and aligned with the students' academic goals. In summary, the data clearly show that students perceive the Cambly application positively, particularly in terms of ease of use, interface design, reliability, confidence-building, and relevance to their academic and personal learning objectives.

3.5 Challenges and Limitations in Using Cambly

Despite these positive outcomes, the study also identified several challenges that affected participants' experiences with Cambly. The most frequently reported issue was internet connectivity, which posed a significant barrier for students in rural areas. Approximately 40% of participants indicated that unstable connections occasionally disrupted their sessions, leading to frustration and missed learning opportunities. This finding highlights the importance of addressing infrastructure gaps to ensure equitable access to digital learning tools across Indonesia (Kaste & Harisma, 2023).

Another challenge involved the cost of Cambly subscriptions, which some participants found to be prohibitive. While the app offers valuable features, its pricing

structure may limit its accessibility for students from lower-income households. Survey data showed that 32% of participants expressed concerns about affordability, and several interviewees suggested that schools or government programs should consider subsidizing such tools to make them more accessible to a wider audience. These findings emphasize the need for institutional support in integrating technology into language education (Fang et al., 2022).

Survey data showed that 32% of participants expressed concerns about affordability, and several interviewees suggested that schools or government programs should consider subsidizing such tools to make them more accesssibel to a wider audience. While the overall reception of Cambly was positive, certain challenges and limitations emerged through qualitative insights and survey percentages. A significant portion of the participants (40%) reported that poor internet connectivity interfered with their learning experience. This issue was particularly pronounced among students in rural areas, where network reliability remains a persistent barrier to digital education. Furthermore, 32% of the respondents indicated that the subscription fee of Cambly was a concern. Although they acknowledged the educational benefits of the application, its cost was viewed as a limitation for students from lower-income households.

3.6 Interactivity

Altrought some students agreed or strongly agreed that Cambly helped boost their speaking confidence, remained neutral, and expressed minor disagreement. These outliers highlight that despite the platform's user-friendly not all students adapted equally well to the new learning mode.

The The data above is supported by interviews that have been conducted by student,the result of the interviews are as follows: "I was afraid I wouldn't understand how to use it, but the layout was very intuitive, and I got used to it quickly." (S6) "It was challenging at first," (S5). "I had to keep asking them to repeat. But after a few sessions, I started understanding naturally, even without translating in my head." (S11)

The Journey with students 6,5, and 11 illustrates the of informants who marked "*neutral*" or "*agree*" when asked if they found Cambly reliable for daily use. Finally, students passionate about football, emphasized that the freedom to choose conversation topics enhanced their motivation. sentiment aligns with the of students who felt more confident speaking with others after using Cambly. reveal a dual truth: Cambly is a promising tool for developing speaking skills, but its effectiveness can be limited by external factors like connectivity, financial accessibility, and linguistic adaptation.

3.7 Disscussions

Qualitative data from interviews provided further insights into students' overall experiences and perceptions of Cambly. Many participants noted that interacting with native speakers helped them overcome their fear of making mistakes, a common barrier to developing speaking skills (Lazarević, 2015). They described feeling more motivated to practice and reported greater confidence in their ability to hold conversations in English.

In summary, the results demonstrate that Cambly is an effective tool for improving speaking proficiency among high school students in Indonesia. Its interactive features and personalized learning approach contributed significantly to the observed improvements in students' skills and confidence. However, challenges related to internet connectivity and subscription costs highlight the need for broader systemic support to maximize the app's potential impact (Samosir & Hamidah, 2023). These findings underscore the importance of integrating technology into language education while addressing accessibility issues to ensure that all students can benefit from innovative learning tools.

4. CONCLUSION

This study revealed that Cambly significantly enhances the speaking proficiency of Indonesian high school students, serving as a valuable supplement to traditional language instruction. Through one-on-one sessions with native English speakers, the application fosters notable improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and overall speaking confidence. Students reported high satisfaction with Cambly's interactive and personalized features, as well as the authentic conversational opportunities it provides. The app's accessibility and flexibility were also recognized as key advantages, enabling students to practice outside of classroom hours and at their own pace. These findings suggest that integrating Cambly into school-based English programs could address the common gap in speaking practice within traditional classrooms, equipping students with practical communication skills needed in a globalized world. However, the study acknowledges limitations, such as the small sample size, short intervention period, and reliance on students with existing internet access, which may limit the generalizability of the results.

Building on these insights, schools are encouraged to explore the adoption of digital platforms like Cambly to expand students' speaking opportunities, with particular attention to affordability and equitable access in resource-limited areas. Subsidized programs or institutional licensing could help ensure all students benefit from such innovations. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to examine the sustainability of speaking improvements over time, as well as comparative studies with other language-learning applications to assess relative effectiveness. Investigating the role of learner motivation, teacher support, and varying instructional contexts could also deepen understanding of how to optimize technology integration in English language education in Indonesia.

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