
Integrating the Cake Application for Speaking Improvement: A Study on Challenges and Opportunities for Pre-Service English Teachers

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Abstract

This study was conducted to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by pre-service English teachers in integrating the use of the Cake application into English language learning, particularly in improving their speaking skills. This study adopted a qualitative research design, with data collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with three pre-service English teachers who are already familiar with and actively use the Cake application to improve their speaking skills. This study employed thematic analysis. The rationale for selecting this analytical method is that it facilitates the identification and grouping of themes. By organizing data into analytical domains, challenges and opportunities emerge iteratively and can be validly identified. After completing the stages of analysis, three themes were identified in relation to the domains of challenges in integrating the Cake application. These themes include: 1) technical and accessibility barriers, 2) pedagogical limitations, and 3) motivational issues. However, the use of Cake also contributed three valuable learning opportunities, namely: 1) access to authentic multimodal input, 2) self-directed and flexible learning, and 3) increased fluency and confidence. From these findings, it can be understood that speaking skills are a significant benefit derived from using this application. This suggests that the use of this application creates opportunities for English language learning, particularly in the development of speaking skills. Nevertheless, it is important to note that its implementation inevitably presents challenges that may hinder optimal learning outcomes.

Keywords: pre-service english teachers; speaking skills; technology integration

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the four essential skills and remains the biggest challenge for students to master in English. In the world of education, it's not just students who sometimes experience complications in using English. The same thing also happens to pre-service English teachers, who are often expected to be able to bridge the bright future of education. This is emphasized by (Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021), who note that in certain situations, a lack of confidence sometimes arises and ultimately disrupts vocabulary memory and pronunciation, which impacts fluent communication.

Swain (1985) adds that these challenges significantly impact the continuity of communication in the language teaching process. This is also supported by the current educational reality, where many pre-service English teachers face challenges in improving their speaking skills. This needs to be understood carefully because if not immediately addressed, it will become a frightening specter for their brilliant future achievements. This is where technology-based learning was finally introduced. This is a promising solution to overcome all of this. However, various impossibilities still exist, which from this we realize that not all applications can be a definite benchmark in supporting the success of the target (Kudela, 2022; Thiyagalingam et al., 2022).

If observed closely, especially in recent years, the integration of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications has increasingly attracted attention and seems tempting in facilitating learning, such as in the field of English language education. The Cake application is one of many other applications as a popular platform that provides a variety of learning facilities, ranging from interactive speaking exercises through videos that are quite relevant to the real world, fast feedback on pronunciation as if it were happening in real time, and simple yet meaningful speaking exercises (Agustin, 2024; Dhahir, 2023).

Research conducted by Paramita et al. (2022) and Aqilah (2024) demonstrated that all opportunities arising from the use of this application indirectly contribute to the development of students' abilities in a definite manner, yet still through well-structured stages. Similarly, a study conducted in Indonesia revealed that both teachers and students felt confident and helped by the Cake application, which not only supported but also facilitated speaking practice in the *Merdeka Belajar* era. It offered helpful feedback for improving speaking quality and, most importantly, was easily accessible and presented authentically (Anggreini et al., 2023; Ali, 2023).

There are many other apps similar to Cake, such as Duolingo. However, information provided by Duvall (2024) and Puspitasari (2023) indicates that each has different advantages in terms of features. They added that if you want varied practice, Duolingo could be an option. However, if you want easily accessible features with video dialogue that takes place like real-world communication, Cake could be the app for you. These touted advantages are somewhat refuted by the findings presented by Kamal and Al-Smadi (2023) and Momeni (2022). They firmly stated that both internal and external factors made the Cake app feel less effective. From this, it can be understood that no matter how sophisticated learning technology is, it is still important to prioritize exploration first. Through this exploration, users will know what to do when faced with a challenging situation.

Although previous research has extensively examined the role of the Cake application in improving speaking skills, it is unfortunate that most of these studies have focused solely on students in general, both schoolchildren and university students, following the prevailing market (Aqilah, 2024; Ali, 2023; Paramita et al., 2022). It would be very different if the focus were on pre-service English teachers, whose numbers are still very minimal, even though in reality, their perspectives are crucial because they will later bear the responsibility and even the obligation in their own classrooms to integrate digital technology in line with current developments (Bayram & Baturay, 2022; Ridha & Fithriani, 2023).

Furthermore, while numerous studies have focused on exploring the benefits of the Cake application, very few have systematically and intensively examined the challenges and opportunities that pre-service English teachers frequently encounter when using this application to develop their speaking skills to a superior level. Broadly speaking, this represents a gap that was successfully identified through a collection of previous research findings. Therefore, this study taps into the new, evolving literature to prevent research from becoming stuck in the same position.

To neatly frame this study, theories are needed that provide not only in-depth but also relevant insights, therefore important theories are taken including the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985) and the TPACK framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). In the theory put

forward by Swain (1985) emphasizes that in achieving maximum development of speaking skills, it is very important to produce language output. Meanwhile, Mishra and Koehler (2006) in their theory highlights that teachers should not be old-fashioned in the sense that they need to be aware of the importance of technology and integrate it effectively with pedagogy and content to achieve better learning levels.

This shows that the use of the Cake application by pre-service English teachers needs to be studied further in depth considering that in the future they will play a role as teachers who will actively carry out educational responsibilities and obligations so that when technology integration is applied in education, they must be truly aware of all forms of opportunities that go hand in hand with the challenges that are certainly present there (Borg, 2006; Koşar, 2024; Loi, 2021).

Some studies have examined the challenges of using applications to improve language competence. The Cake application is one such example. Practical dependencies, discontinuities related to productive participation, and several dependencies arising from the patronage of educational science are identified as challenges in technology-based learning (Momeni, 2022; Warschauer & Healey, 1998). However, behind these challenges, opportunities for benefits are also unavoidable. This is as explained by Godwin-Jones (2018), who emphasized that proper integration can create not only flexibility in learning but also provide tangible advice connections to support achievement.

Imamyartha et al. (2023) added that student motivation escalation was stimulated to a maximum. This demonstrates that proper integration offers various powerful contributions to learning outcomes. Unfortunately, the abstraction in this research appears to be not only about who is implemented but also where. From this, it's understandable that previous research hasn't explored the impact of using English language learning support apps in EFL classes. They only examined the general benefits. Furthermore, the challenges and opportunities of using apps like Cake haven't been thoroughly investigated. This is crucial for further study so users can better understand how their actions impact them.

The urgency of this research stems from multiple factors. The increasing reliance on technology in language education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic's shift to remote learning, makes understanding both the potential and limitations of MALL applications critically important (Imamyartha et al., 2023). Pre-service teachers graduating today will enter classrooms where technology integration is not optional but expected, yet many report feeling inadequately prepared to make informed decisions about digital tools (Koşar, 2024). Without nuanced understanding of specific applications' affordances and constraints, teachers may either over-rely on technology without addressing its limitations or underutilize valuable tools due to unrecognized potential.

Furthermore, the substantial investment in educational technology by Indonesian institutions and government agencies necessitates evidence-based guidance to ensure resources are directed toward effective implementations (Anggreini et al., 2023). The persistence of speaking skill challenges among Indonesian English learners and teachers (Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021) further underscores the need to explore all potential avenues for improvement, including well-designed technology integration.

It's worth noting that the presence of this gap heightened the researcher's curiosity. Therefore, through lengthy reflection, the researcher finally manifested this curiosity through two research questions. This represents a form of participation taken to contribute to understanding in the EFL context. These two research questions are: (1) What challenges do prospective English teachers frequently encounter when the Cake app is fully integrated into EFL instruction to improve their speaking skills? and (2) What learning opportunities do they mostly experience to improve their speaking skills when directly integrating the use of the Cake application? Otherwise stated, the purpose of this research is focused on pre-service English teachers as a contribution to the world of education. Through this, it is hoped that they will become more aware that technology-based learning presents not only opportunities but also challenges that must be addressed wisely.

This research offers something different that is rarely explored by others, namely related to the object of study. Here, a new perspective is presented, with pre-service English teachers actively using the Case application to support their speaking skills as the main focus. Most studies would be much more interested in examining EFL teachers who have been involved in education for a long time, believing they have extensive experience. However, this research differs because it aims to present information that has not been fully explored.

From this, the researchers also have high hopes that sophisticated learning technologies such as the Cake application can be utilized to improve teacher skills, which can be utilized effectively, and solutions can be found when challenges arise. It can be concluded that this study explicitly links the direct learning experiences delivered by pre-service English teachers with their professional practice as much more senior teachers in the future, so that this study not only offers theoretical but also practical contributions to the field of English language teaching because it involves real subjects.

METHODS

A descriptive qualitative research design was chosen to explore in depth the perspectives of pre-service English teachers, focusing on the challenges and opportunities related to the integration of the Cake application in improving their speaking skills. In line with previous research on technology integration in education (Bayram & Baturay, 2022), this design was considered appropriate for facilitating an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and reflections (Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Ridha & Fithriani, 2023). This approach was effective in addressing the research questions by exploring participants' perceptions and identifying both the challenges and practical opportunities encountered while using the Cake application to support their speaking skills.

This study involved three pre-service English teachers who had teaching experience and were enrolled in a final-level teacher education program at a university in East Java. Purposive sampling was initially used to select participants, and three were ultimately chosen because they met the predetermined criteria. These criteria included: (1) regular and active use of the Cake application (at least three times per week for a minimum of three months), (2) enrollment as final-year students in an English teacher education program, and (3) completion of at least two teaching practices, including both microteaching and school-based practice.

These criteria were established to ensure that participants had sufficient experience with both the application and teaching practice (Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Koşar, 2024).

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted offline to allow participants to express their responses clearly and minimize misunderstandings. The interview questions focused on the challenges and opportunities experienced when using the Cake application to support speaking skill development. This method was selected because it enabled participants to provide detailed and flexible responses while maintaining alignment with the research focus (Ary et al., 2019; Anggreini et al., 2023; Bayram & Baturay, 2022). Each interview lasted between 40 and 50 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed to ensure data accuracy.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved six stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition and labeling, and report writing. A deductive coding approach was applied, guided by pre-determined themes derived from previous studies on the use of the Cake application. For challenges, the themes included (1) technical and accessibility barriers, (2) pedagogical limitations, and (3) motivational issues (Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Momeni, 2022; Puspitasari, 2023; Ali, 2023). For opportunities, the themes included (1) access to authentic multimodal input, (2) self-directed and flexible learning, and (3) increased fluency and confidence (Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Aqilah, 2024; Momeni, 2022; Ali, 2023; Puspitasari, 2023). These themes guided the identification and grouping of patterns in the interview data.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research and assured that their data would be treated confidentially. They were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. To protect their identities, pseudonyms were used. All recorded and transcribed data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher for research purposes (Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Ridha & Fithriani, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study identified three themes related to the challenges and opportunities frequently encountered by pre-service English teachers as they strive to improve their speaking skills by integrating the Cake application. Clarity of understanding is emphasized to the maximum in this research paper. Therefore, each analytical domain is discussed in depth in the two subchapters below. The decision on the number of subchapters was made through a lengthy process, adapting it to the needs of presenting the research findings. The chapters also provide a brief overview, but also include tables for clarity.

1. Challenges for Pre-Service English Teachers in Integrating the Use of the Cake Application

By looking at the thematic coding adopted from previous research theories, the challenges in improving speaking skills faced by pre-service English teachers in integrating the use of the Cake application have three themes, including 1) technical and accessibility barriers, 2) pedagogical limitations, and 3) motivational issues. Before explaining the three themes,

complete with an analysis of the results of semi-structured interviews, it would be better to gain a more intense understanding of the themes, indicators, and sources, which can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Themes of Challenges

Themes	Indicators	Sources
Technical and Accessibility Barriers	Internet connection, device, application lag, difficulty accessing features	Kamal (2023); Momeni (2022); Puspitasari (2023)
Pedagogical Limitations	Inappropriate material, lack of support for teaching methods, limited content, curriculum integration	Kamal (2023); Ali (2023); Puspitasari (2023)
Motivational Issues	Boredom, repetition, decreased motivation, disinterest, lack of engagement	Momeni (2022); Puspitasari (2023); Ali (2023)

Technical and Accessibility Barriers

Technical issues often accompany any technology integration and constitute a significant obstacle. Some might assume that technical problems are rooted in the technology being implemented. This refers to the limited feasibility of digital equipment. Unstable internet connections are also a problem. Furthermore, suboptimal app download speeds are another issue. This is reinforced by interview data obtained from several participants, one of whom, Sari, explained that her home internet connection was often unstable. This caused the applications she accessed to frequently fail to progress to the next section. This made her uncomfortable while studying.

"The videos I played often didn't work as expected. Then, when I checked my internet connection, I found there were some annoying issues. This caused the video to frequently pause, and even speech would precede movement. Imagine, this really gave me a headache." (Sari)

The same thing happened to Asti. With a sad tone, she deeply regretted this weakness because it impacted her study routine. She said she struggled to use certain features.

"Using this app is not easy for me because I admit it is useful, but sometimes I still have trouble using the features I really want to try. I often mention God's name while using this app because it refuses to be moved. The urge to re-learn sometimes fades away. You could say it's a bit annoying because it wastes time." (Asti)

Rina also explained the problems that arise due to the limitations of her mobile device during the interview. She said the device she uses sometimes annoys her. She has to wait for minutes on end for something tedious, which disrupts her learning. This frustrates her because it prevents her from maximizing her practice.

"Annoying is the right word for my phone because it often freezes. I want to switch to another material but cannot. Waiting is a boring activity, and I have to do it. I'm so fed up sometimes that I want to cry because I can't do anything else." (Rina)

Despite its numerous benefits, its use still presents challenges, as evidenced by interview data. Therefore, a swift and appropriate solution is essential to ensure optimal learning goals

are achieved without missing expectations. Especially for pre-service English teachers who really rely on internet connections and personal cell phones, where we know that not all of them have good quality and full support.

1. Pedagogical Limitations

Pedagogical constraints are another challenge that arises when the Cake app is integrated into learning. This is not based on mere argument, but rather on concrete evidence. Interview participants unhesitatingly stated that the app provides content that seems boring. This means the content does not properly relate to learning objectives. This clearly contradicts the purpose of learning. If the interactions within the content are well-designed and directed, learning will at least proceed as expected. This was revealed by Sari in the interview session.

"More than once or twice, I felt passive when using this app, even though my primary goal was to explore how much my speaking skills had improved." (Sari)

Asti also added that the content presented is too uniform. It sometimes doesn't align with the material that should be taught at that level. If this continues, it will be difficult to explore the app's potential.

"If I may say, the content sometimes seems mediocre. The material taught at that level is completely out of step with reality. If it were more tailored, the results would be much more optimal." (Asti)

On the other hand, Rina stated that the individual feedback she should have received was absent. This made her doubt the accuracy and correctness of her pronunciation.

"I feel unsure about the pronunciation exercises I am using this app. This app should provide individual feedback. This is important so users, including myself, can assess their speaking skills." (Rina)

It cannot be denied that this application offers a million constructive exercises for users. However, it cannot be denied that this app cannot completely eliminate or even eliminate instructional control. This means it cannot fully and optimally provide feedback, provide appropriate context, and especially feedback, contextualization, and appropriate curriculum implementation, all of which are in stark contrast to the reality of classroom learning.

Motivational Issues

Another challenge frequently encountered when using the Cake app is related to motivation. The availability of stagnant materials between one content and another is common. This unwittingly creates a repetitive pattern in learning. Frustration becomes a real impact if this is allowed to continue. This reduced user engagement and reduced the likelihood of developing speaking skills. This goes against academic credibility, which emphasizes learning must be aligned with objectives. Sari added that this obstacle ultimately makes it difficult to use coherently, despite her strong faith in the assistance the app offers.

"I've found myself bored and less motivated to access the Cake app more frequently. The app is great, but the material management is still lacking." (Sari)

This argument was also emphasized by Asti. She didn't deny that the instability of the training remains present in this so-called sophisticated application. While sometimes considered trivial, the enthusiasm for learning can be stifled if left unchecked.

“I’m not studying just to memorize, as I can do that by reading books. I want to practice, so unique and diverse material will really help me learn. This makes me frustrated and lowers my motivation to continue using this app to develop my speaking skills.” (Asti)

On the other hand, Rina's busy schedule often prevents her from optimally utilizing the available practice sessions. A drastic decline in motivation for learning has made her reluctant to access it regularly. This, of course, makes it less possible for her to freely explore her speaking skills.

“I am often faced with a busy schedule, whether teaching or otherwise, which often leads me to skip practicing using this app. Honestly, I realize that this is a disadvantage for me because even though the app's content is sometimes less varied, it still helps me develop my speaking skills.” (Rina)

It can be concluded that this motivational challenge is not impossible when using this app. Certain factors contribute to this. To increase the app's potential, content stability needs to be evaluated. Furthermore, promoting communicative interaction is also crucial. Therefore, users need to get additional effective strategies and incentives in using this application, even though it is not optimal, but it is always integrated.

2. Learning Opportunities for Pre-Service English Teachers in Integrating the Use of the Cake Application

Despite the numerous challenges, pre-service English teachers still found significant learning opportunities. Based on thematic coding adopted from previous research theories, the opportunities for improving speaking skills faced by pre-service English teachers in integrating the use of the Cake application fall into three themes: 1) access to authentic multimodal input, 2) self-directed and flexible learning, and 3) increased fluency and confidence. Before elaborating on the three themes, complete with an analysis of the semi-structured interview results, it would be better to gain a more in-depth understanding of the themes, indicators, and sources, as can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Themes of Opportunities

Themes	Indicators	Sources
Access to Authentic Multimodal Input	Video, audio, dialogue, native speakers, real context	Kamal (2023); Momeni (2022); Ali (2023)
Self-directed and Flexible Learning	Self-study, time flexibility, learning control, repetition at will	Puspitasari (2023); Kamal (2023); Ali (2023)
Increased Fluency and Confidence	Fluency, pronunciation, confidence, repeated practice	Kamal (2023); Momeni (2022); Puspitasari (2023)

Access to Authentic Multimodal Input

Access to authentic multimodal input is one of the opportunities offered by the Cake app. This app displays both videos and dialogue, making it worthy of being called multimodal. Unlike typical textbooks, which only display images and text, the Cake app features live conversations conducted by native speakers whose primary language is English, resulting in a strong accent. Furthermore, the conversations are crafted as authentically as possible, immersing users in them. This ultimately stimulates them and makes them accustomed to listening to conversations using English as a foreign language. This is certainly different from

textbooks, which only present images and text. This is as expressed by Sari, who fully appreciates the features provided in this app. The presentation of authentic dialogue, especially this safe one, is a plus point in improving her speaking skills.

“Practicing using the Cake app makes me feel as if I am in the real dialogue. I feel like I am involved in the communication. This has been a bridge for me to become more familiar with the accents and intonations often used by native speakers. Furthermore, it has also helped me understand how to interpret expressions, even when spoken in a foreign language.” (Sari)

Asti also took great care in the multimodal presentation of this app. She expressed her appreciation for how it truly facilitates her speaking skills. She has frequently studied the theory presented in textbooks, and she gained practical experience through the app's presentation.

“This app is a complete package. It could be said to be a perfect complement to textbooks. I can freely explore its practical applications and apply them directly to my independent communication. (Asti)

This point of view is not much different from Rina's. Presenting authentic conversations in video format can stimulate learning outcomes. She believes that through this, she has become accustomed to recognizing the diversity of accents and pronunciation patterns, which has significantly improved her understanding of what it's like to speak English.

“As much as possible, I make it a habit to watch videos in the Cake app, listen, and then practice. I gradually acquired the art of speaking through dialogues that weren't too far from real-life contexts. This immersive experience made me feel like I was actually speaking to someone.” (Rina)

Based on the interviews in this section, it was revealed that this application does indeed contain multimodal elements. Upon closer examination, this becomes a unique feature that offers benefits to users. This is because the feedback provided is presented without pretense, which is certainly different from what is presented in textbooks. Properly used, this application will help users develop a more comprehensive understanding because they are no longer simply bombarded with theory but are also shown practical applications.

1. Self-directed and Flexible Learning

Another equally appealing opportunity offered by this app is self-directed and flexible learning. Sari expressed this in an interview, believing that the app is very convenient for her because she can manage her learning at her own pace. This means she can determine what she wants.

“I do not know why, but I feel comfortable using this app. With this app, I can progress at my own pace, without demands or pressure to meet specific targets. Here, my true self is truly manifested. It's formed simply yet responsibly. So, this app is a perfect fit for my daily routine.” (Sari)

Asti also agreed with Sari. She also provided additional information, emphasizing that new vocabulary is formed through repetitive stimulation. Although she doesn't rule out the possibility that it can sometimes be tedious. This allows her to improve over time.

“I really like this app. I admit I get bored easily. So, if I have to repeat something, I tell myself, ‘Oh, this is practice to expand my vocabulary.’ This helps me overcome my weakness,

which is not yet being very skilled at speaking, but with this, I can learn without being pressed for time.” (Asti)

Rina also experienced another positive feeling, as she felt increasingly responsible for the success of her learning. This flexibility does negotiate a sense of security while learning. However, a sense of responsibility remains firmly rooted in the heart.

“With this app, I can be myself. I can learn at my own pace, but the focus remains on practicing my speaking skills.” (Rina)

It can be concluded that this application is tailored to user needs. Users are guaranteed freedom of use, but the focus remains on the desired goals. In other words, they can learn according to their own abilities, as each user is different. From this, it can be concluded that users are given full control over their learning. However, responsibility for success remains the main point.

2. Increased Fluency and Confidence

Lastly, the participants who took part said their fluency and confidence had greatly improved. Sari spoke about how the self-recording tool helped her speak better.

“Listening to myself record made me aware of my blunders and gave me more confidence. I feel more ready to talk to them in person.” (Sari)

Asti also noticed that her pronunciation and general fluency had become better, and she thought this was because she practiced a lot.

“I noticed that my pronunciation got better after practicing a lot, and I felt more fluent. It was incredibly inspiring to hear about my development over time.” (Asti)

Rina also said that using the application made her less anxious about speaking in class, which made her more ready to do so.

“Now that I’ve used this application so many times, I’m not scared to speak English in class anymore. Doubts were clearly being eroded within me. Saying what was on my mind was concrete proof.” (Rina)

The common thread of these findings underscores the optimal use of the Cake app, which can offer not only guaranteed speaking skills but also growing confidence in one's own abilities. This all flows gradually but consistently, of course, because the app is enriched with sophisticated multimodal elements rarely found in other apps.

Discussion

The results of this research show that pre-service English teachers have a lot of problems when they use the Cake application to work on their speaking abilities. The challenges frequently discussed by participants, which emerged as a theme, were technical barriers and accessibility. It all started with disrupted internet connections, both cellular data and Wi-Fi, compounded by the far-from-adequate availability of devices. This ultimately led to hampered and disrupted access to applications. These difficulties align with other research indicating that digital language learning aids are significantly dependent on a resilient technical infrastructure, with any disturbances potentially obstructing effective learning (Agustin, 2024; Kamal & Al-Smadi, 2023; Ali, 2023).

Sari and Asti are examples of users who directly experienced several difficulties accessing the Cake app. This was particularly true when they opened the app, which often froze

and ran slowly. This disrupted their learning activities. Puspitasari (2023) supports this finding, stating that the decline in interest and motivation in using digital apps is actually influenced by technical issues. In other words, the use of technology undeniably provides significant benefits for learning, but one must remain prepared to accept and embrace any challenges, including integrating the Cake app.

The next challenge that arises and often worries users is related to pedagogical limitations. The learning offered by the Cake app is indeed very useful, but when linked to the curriculum context, it is quite different. The richness of vocabulary is an advantage that often arises alongside the boredom that occurs when repeating material at a high intensity. Because of this repetition, participants sometimes feel that the desired communication skills take a long time to develop. As stated by Anggreini et al. (2023) and Ali (2023), even the most sophisticated MALL app cannot completely replace real-life communication, where direct interaction sometimes provides a plus point in bridging learning.

This is similar to what was conveyed by Swain (1985), who referred to Vygotsky's idea regarding the ZPD theory, where the improvement of speaking skills is indeed influenced by the surrounding environment and also stimulation from interlocutors with superior knowledge. Indirectly, this indicates that technology is not without its drawbacks. In other words, it cannot replace classroom learning. Technological advancements like the Cake app are merely tools to facilitate English language learning.

Motivational challenges emerged in interviews with participants. Their learning interest in using the Cake app has recently declined. This is not without reason, but rather due to the limited variety of material presented. The concepts are limited to the same concepts, making them prone to repetition. This leads to increased negative emotional fluctuations, which erode learning motivation (Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021; Puspitasari, 2023). Despite this, the app cannot be considered bad. It's called that because its educational interface remains a plus, as Rina noted. However, this was only felt at the beginning of the learning process, as she gradually became bored with the repetition, which led to a slight decline in her learning.

Drawing on information from Aqilah (2024) and Ali (2023), to stimulate consistent motivation, the application can be triggered using gamification. The underlying rationale for gamification is its ability to engage users' learning interests through engaging learning activities. It's understandable that a balance of ideas and accessibility is a key driver of motivation. Spontaneity isn't the right word to define motivation, but it's more appropriate to say it occurs gradually. Therefore, application developers need to explore design and materials. However, just as importantly, users must also be one step ahead in acting to provide solutions to challenges wisely and promptly.

Although some challenges were encountered during its integration, the presence of the Cake application also brings opportunities to improve speaking skills for pre-service English teachers. Similar to what Agustin (2024), Ali (2023), and Paramita et al. (2022) stated, successful learning is learning in which learners can freely explore what they are learning. In this case, the rich, multimodal learning context makes it easy for app users to delve deeper into the material. Furthermore, it offers users greater independence, allowing them to act boldly in their learning according to their own desires.

This will further instill confidence in their ability to improve their speaking skills in their own way. However, it is important to note that they must maintain responsibility and be able to manage their behavior wisely, as the freedom granted is not unlimited but must be focused on learning objectives. This is obtained from repeated practice, although sometimes it may seem boring, but when done slowly can provide a rich vocabulary intake. This is not just empty talk; there is evidence to support it. This evidence suggests that the effects of boredom never fade with repeated exposure, but speaking skills are a plus, born from a sharp memory accumulated through a rich vocabulary (Dhahir, 2023; Godwin-Jones, 2018; Imamyartha et al., 2023).

In conclusion, this study provides information regarding the integration of technology in the form of the Cake application to support speaking skills from a new perspective from pre-service English teachers. With its sophistication, this application offers numerous learning opportunities, especially in helping to improve speaking skills (Agustin, 2024; Ali, 2023; Koşar, 2024). However, it cannot be denied that the challenges of its use remain quite disturbing. Indirectly, this information will be beneficial for users of this application, especially EFL learners. If they want to seize opportunities and avoid challenges, the support and management of this application's use must also be provided as well as possible.

CONCLUSION

As the title suggests, this study focuses on the challenges and opportunities that arise when pre-service English teachers integrate the Cake app to improve their speaking skills. The findings, based on interview data, demonstrate that even the most sophisticated learning technology offers opportunities, there are still gaps that can challenge users at times. However, as wise users, it's wise not to dwell on these challenges and be pessimistic. Challenges like device limitations, poor internet connectivity, and app instability are technical issues that aren't entirely significant, as they can be addressed well in advance. However, if these challenges stem from a lack of motivation to learn using the app, it's crucial for users to control their emotions and maintain a positive mindset, emphasizing that delays and a lack of diversity in the material are not significant.

Therefore, it's important to instill in oneself that these occur for a specific purpose. For example, a lack of diversity in the material, while repetition may seem boring, can improve memory. Furthermore, pedagogical limitations, whether incongruent with the school curriculum or seemingly repetitive content development, should be considered as something that can eventually be overcome. In other words, all these challenges teach us to remain enthusiastic and not hinder practice in achieving learning goals. Therefore, despite the challenges, this research also emphasizes the opportunities that emerge, reinforcing that this application is indeed not to be underestimated. These opportunities include not only the availability of authentic, multimodal materials, but also flexibility of use and increased self-confidence.

Most importantly, as users, we must be wise and responsible in using this application so that our speaking skills can improve significantly. Furthermore, this research does provide many new insights that are beneficial for users of learning technologies like the Cake app. However, limitations remain. This presents new work for future researchers to complement or

even improve upon. This limitation concerns the sample size, which focused on only three pre-service English tutors who described their experiences using the Cake app. This somewhat individual experience can sometimes seem less specific.

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