Explorations in English Learning

Technology-Assisted Speaking Practice: The Role of the Cake App in Improving Students' Speaking Skills

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Abstract This Classroom Action Research (CAR) aimed to improve the speaking skills of seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan through the use of the Cake application as a digital learning medium. The research was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting, involving 33 students of Class VII B in the 2024/2025 academic year. Data were collected through speaking tests, classroom observations, interviews, and documentation. The success indicators were set at 75% improvement in classroom participation and 85% of students achieving the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) of 75. The findings showed substantial improvement in students' speaking abilities after using the Cake application. The pre-test average score was 56.51%, categorized as "low." In Cycle I, the post-test average increased to 60.24%, although only 21.21% of students met the mastery criterion. In Cycle II, the post-test average rose significantly to 75.15%, with 75.15% of students successfully achieving mastery. Observation results revealed notable gains in classroom participation, engagement, and pronunciation, increasing from an average score of 2.18 in Cycle I to 4.55 and 4.70 in Cycle II. Interview results supported these findings, showing that students became more confident, motivated, and interested in participating in speaking activities when learning with the Cake application. Overall, the research concludes that the integration of the Cake application effectively enhances students' pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary mastery, confidence, and participation, demonstrating that digital media can significantly strengthen English speaking skills in junior high school learners.
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Keywords: Speaking skill, cake application, technology-assisted, classroom action research, English practice

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is widely recognized as one of the most essential skills in English language learning because it involves the ability to express ideas, emotions, and information orally in a socially meaningful way. As one of the four major language skills, listening, speaking, reading, and writing, speaking plays a central role in enabling learners to participate in real communication and social interaction (Brown, 2004). According to Nunan (2015), speaking represents the most direct manifestation of learners' ability in a second language, as it requires them not only to produce

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linguistic forms but also to process meaning quickly and effectively in real time. Furthermore, many students evaluate their success in learning English based on their speaking performance, because oral proficiency is perceived as the most visible indicator of communicative competence (Eyesus, 2015; Richards, 2008). In addition, speaking ability is strongly supported by vocabulary knowledge, which serves as the foundation of all other linguistic skills. Nation (2018) emphasizes that vocabulary is a crucial component of language proficiency, because without sufficient vocabulary learners cannot express ideas clearly, comprehend spoken input, or participate in communicative situations. Therefore, vocabulary development becomes one of the essential prerequisites for improving students' oral communication skills.

Despite the importance of speaking skills, many Indonesian students continue to face challenges in communicating orally in English, especially at the junior high school level. Based on preliminary observations at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan, several difficulties were identified. Many students lack confidence when speaking and often hesitate to express themselves due to fear of making mistakes. This aligns with the findings of Harmer (2015), who notes that anxiety and self-doubt are common psychological barriers affecting students' speaking performance. Students also struggle with understanding spoken input, particularly when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary or fast speech, which leads to difficulty responding in English. In addition, learners at the school demonstrate limited vocabulary mastery, which restricts their ability to construct meaningful sentences. These problems are further compounded by students' tendency to translate every sentence word-for-word from Indonesian rather than speaking naturally, a behavior that often results from a lack of communicative exposure (Tahir, 2015). Such conditions indicate that traditional teaching approaches may not sufficiently address students' speaking difficulties, and more engaging, interactive, and student-centered methods are needed.

In the current era of digital learning, technology-based media have become increasingly important in creating interactive learning environments that support communicative competence. The use of multimedia tools, particularly those integrating audio and visual input, has been shown to enhance learners' motivation and facilitate better comprehension of spoken language (Mayer, 2020). Studies by Lestari (2017) and Korbiyah (2020), for instance, demonstrate that audiovisual materials not only stimulate students' interest but also improve their ability to retell information and construct spoken narratives in English. These findings support the view of Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which states that learners benefit from the combination of visual and auditory channels when processing linguistic information. Moreover, communicative language teaching (CLT) frameworks emphasize the importance of meaningful interaction, authentic language exposure, and learner-centered pedagogy (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Richards, 2006). Therefore, integrating interactive digital tools into English learning aligns well with contemporary pedagogical approaches that encourage active participation, fluency development, and real-life communication.

One digital tool that has gained popularity in recent years for English learning is the Cake application, an Android-based platform designed to help users improve their speaking performance through video-based learning and AI-assisted pronunciation feedback. The application features short clips from native speakers, daily English expressions, dialogue practice, and speech recognition technology that provides immediate evaluation of pronunciation and fluency (Rachmawati, 2023). As noted by Octavianita et al. (2022), Cake offers an accessible and engaging environment where learners can practice speaking in meaningful contexts while receiving instant corrective feedback, an instructional feature known to significantly enhance oral proficiency (Li, 2021). The app also includes bilingual subtitles, vocabulary highlights, and review features that support learners in acquiring new expressions and improving their accuracy. Because of these features, the application has been widely recognized as a useful tool for autonomous learning, especially for improving speaking skills (Nuraeni & Yanthi, 2020). The enjoyable and user-friendly interface also increases students' motivation, a key element that greatly influences second language learning outcomes (Dörnyei, 2014).

Although the Cake application has been used in several educational contexts, research on its effectiveness has mostly been conducted in higher education. Previous studies, such as those by Gusti, et al. (2022), have shown improvement in college students' pronunciation and fluency after using Cake. Other studies have focused on specific aspects of speaking, such as debating skills (Rokhayani, 2015) or the influence of vocabulary on speaking performance (Omaar, 2016; Adam, 2016). However, empirical evidence regarding the use of Cake among junior high school learners, especially within Indonesian classroom settings, remains limited. Most existing studies have employed quantitative methods or experimental designs, while action-based approaches that involve cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting are rarely applied. Therefore, there is a clear research gap in exploring how the Cake application can be integrated into junior high school speaking instruction through Classroom Action Research (CAR) to systematically improve students' speaking outcomes.

Given the persistent speaking difficulties observed at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan and the potential benefits offered by technology-enhanced learning tools, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the Cake application in improving students' English speaking skills. Specifically, the purpose of this research is to determine whether the integration of Cake into the instructional process can enhance students' speaking performance in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and confidence. Using Classroom Action Research, this study aims not only to assess learning outcomes but also to identify changes in students' engagement and participation throughout the learning cycles. Findings from this study are expected to contribute to the existing literature on technology-based language learning and provide practical insights for English teachers seeking innovative strategies to support learners' speaking development.

METHOD

This study was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan, located in Kabupaten Sumba Barat Daya. The research subjects were the students of Class VII B in the 2024–2025 academic year, consisting of 33 students (14 males and 19 females). This class was selected based on the English teacher's recommendation and the results of preliminary observations, which indicated that the students had low speaking ability, limited vocabulary mastery, and low confidence in using English.

Based on background back on top, this research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR), which is designed to improve teaching and learning practices in the classroom through systematic cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), CAR is a reflective process conducted collaboratively to enhance the rationality and effectiveness of educational practices. Arikunto (in Fauziah, 2018) and Susilawati (2018) also defines CAR as research carried out by teachers in the classroom to improve learning outcomes through planned and evaluated actions.

CAR is appropriate for this study because the goal is to improve students' speaking skills through the use of the Cake application, and the model allows the researcher to intervene directly, observe changes, and refine strategies in repeated cycles. The research consisted of three major stages; pre-cycle, cycle I, and cycle II where each cycle follows the model by Kemmis and McTaggart, consisting of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting-evaluating.

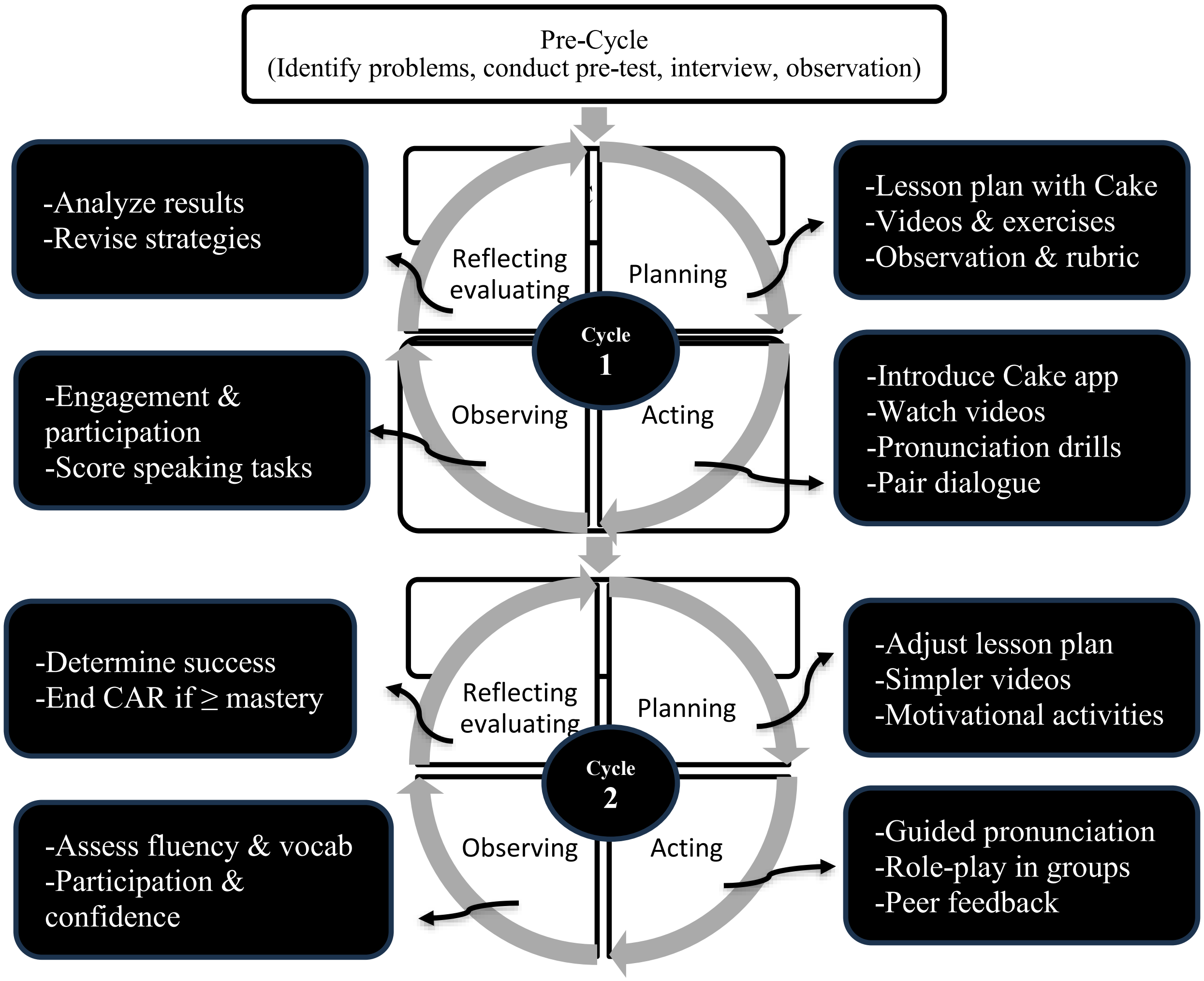

Figure 1. Procedure of CAR

The Figure 1 shows that before entering the cycles, a pre-cycle stage was conducted to identify the students' initial speaking abilities and the overall classroom condition prior to the use of the Cake application. During this stage, the researcher conducted interviews with the English teacher, observed students' behavior during English lessons, and administered a diagnostic speaking test. The results revealed several learning problems, such as students' difficulty expressing ideas, limited vocabulary mastery, low confidence in speaking, frequent mispronunciation, and passive participation. These findings served as the foundation for designing the actions implemented in Cycle I. In Cycle I, the researcher prepared lesson plans incorporating the Cake application, selected suitable video materials, designed speaking tasks, and developed observation sheets and rubrics. During the acting stage, students were introduced to the Cake application, engaged with short video materials, practiced vocabulary and pronunciation, imitated native speakers, and performed short speaking tasks. Observation focused on students' engagement, accuracy, fluency, vocabulary use, confidence, and classroom interaction. Reflection on Cycle I revealed improvements but also noted remaining issues such as hesitation, difficulty imitating intonation, and limited vocabulary use. Therefore, revisions were planned for the next cycle.

Cycle II was designed based on the reflection of Cycle I to provide more intensive and supportive speaking practice. The planning stage involved revising the lesson plan, selecting simpler and more relevant videos from the Cake application, designing improved speaking tasks, and preparing new observation instruments. The acting stage emphasized enhanced pronunciation drills, extended vocabulary practice, small-group role-play, and opportunities for peer feedback. Observations in Cycle II focused on documenting changes in fluency, pronunciation accuracy, vocabulary use, and student confidence, as well as overall classroom participation. Finally, in the reflection stage, the researcher evaluated whether the actions had successfully met the predetermined success criteria, namely, that at least 75% of students achieved the minimum speaking competency score. If these criteria were met, the CAR process was considered successful and concluded; otherwise, further cycles would be required. Through these stages, the CAR process systematically improved students' speaking skills using the Cake application.

The research instruments used in this Classroom Action Research consisted of observation sheets, interviews, and speaking tests, which were adapted from established qualitative and quantitative data collection frameworks. Observation sheets were developed based on guidelines from Arikunto (2018), who states that observation is essential for recording real classroom behavior and instructional activities. Interviews were adapted from the interview technique described by Sugiyono (2017), who explains that interviews allow researchers to explore deeper information regarding students' learning difficulties and classroom conditions. The speaking test used in this study was adapted from the speaking assessment criteria proposed by Brown (2004), focusing on pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and confidence. These three instruments, observation, interview, and speaking test, were combined to ensure comprehensive, valid, and reliable data for evaluating the effectiveness of the Cake application in improving students' speaking skills.

FINDINGS

The Effectiveness of the Cake Application in Improving Students' Speaking Skills

To evaluate the effectiveness of the Cake application in improving students' speaking skills, pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted. The following tables present the students' scores before and after the implementation of the Classroom Action Research (CAR), showing the progress from the pre-test, post-test Cycle I, to post-test Cycle II.

Table 1. Comparison of Pre-Test (cycle1), Post-Test 1 (cycle 1), and Post-Test 2 (cycle 2) Results

Aspect Compared	Pre-Test	Post-Test 1	Post-Test 2	Improvement Pre → P1	Improvement P1 → P2	Improvement Pre → P2
Total Score	1865	2060	2480	+195	+420	+615
Class Average (%)	56.51%	60.24%	75.15%	+3.73%	+14.91%	+18.64%
Students Passed (≥70)	0	7	24	+7 students	+17 students	+24 students
Percentage Passed (%)	0%	21.21%	72.73%	+21.21%	+51.52%	+72.73%
Students Failed (<70)	33	26	9	–7 students	–17 students	–24 students
Percentage Failed (%)	100%	78.79%	27.27%	–21.21%	–51.52%	–72.73%
Achievement Status	Not Successful	Not Successful	Successful	—	—	—

The results of the pre-test and post-test 1 on the table 1 reveal a noticeable improvement in students' speaking performance after the implementation of the Cake application in Cycle I, although the improvement has not yet reached the expected mastery level. In the pre-test, students obtained a total score of 1865, with an average of 56.51%, indicating that most students were still categorized as unsuccessful. None of the students reached the minimum mastery criterion (KKM = 70), showing that the initial speaking ability of Class VII B remained low. Students showed weaknesses in vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, fluency, and confidence.

In contrast, the post-test 1 results show progress in students' speaking performance. The total score increased from 1865 (pre-test) to 2060 (post-test 1), representing a gain of 195 points. The class average also increased from 56.51% to 60.24%, showing a 3.73% improvement. Additionally, 7 out of 33 students (21.21%) succeeded in achieving the minimum score of 70, whereas in the pre-test, no students achieved mastery. This indicates that the application of the Cake app in Cycle I contributed to measurable improvement in students' speaking skills. However, the mastery level of the class did not meet the expected classical completeness criterion of 75%, meaning that learning in Cycle I was not yet successful, and further improvements were necessary for Cycle II.

In Cycle II, the researcher strengthened the instructional strategies by providing more repetition drills, selecting simpler and more relevant Cake videos, incorporating small-group role-play, and providing peer feedback opportunities. These improvements resulted in a significant increase in performance, with the class average rising to 75.15% and 24 students (72.73%) achieving mastery. The number of students who passed increased by 17 students from Cycle I and 24 students from the pre-test. This substantial improvement demonstrates the effectiveness of the Cake application in enhancing key speaking components such as pronunciation, vocabulary use, fluency, and confidence. Overall, the data clearly show that the students achieved marked progress from the pre-cycle to Cycle II, fulfilling the objectives of this research.

From the results of data analysis, it can be concluded that there is an increase in students' speaking ability from cycle 1 to cycle ll where in cycle I there were 33 students who had reached the completion of speaking ability. The improvement can be seen from the involvement of students' activeness, increased empathy, and more positive communication during the learning process. The teacher felt that the strategy applied in cycle II was appropriate and did not need to be continued to the next cycle.

Students' Progress on Speaking Skills

To provide a clear overview of students' progress in speaking skills, the following table summarizes the combined results of classroom observations and interview feedback from Cycle I and Cycle II. Students are grouped based on similar performance patterns to highlight overall improvements in participation, engagement, and pronunciation after using the Cake application.

Table 2: Combined Observation and Interview Results

Student Group	Observation Cycle I (P/E/Pr)	Observation Cycle II (P/E/Pr)	Interview Feedback
AMK, ECR, EM	2 / 2 / 2	4 / 4 / 4	Gained confidence; more motivated; improved vocabulary; better pronunciation
AEN, JSB, KDB, MKM	2 / 2 / 3	4 / 4 / 4	More confident; practicing pronunciation; vocabulary improving
ATI, AB, DDB, MAA, OBT, SB, VB, YL, YDN	3 / 3 / 3	5 / 5 / 5	Confident; fluent; active in dialogues; enjoys speaking tasks
AAA, FTS, NM	1 / 1 / 2	4 / 4 / 4	Less nervous; willing to participate; able to speak short sentences
FL, HSI, ISS, MRL, MSP	3 / 3 / 3	5 / 5 / 5	Active; confident; good fluency and pronunciation
HL, MTI, MAN, MSS, OAS	2 / 2 / 3	4 / 4 / 4	Improving confidence; vocabulary improving; more willing to speak

The observation results from Cycle I indicate that most students initially showed low to moderate participation, engagement, and pronunciation skills. Many students were hesitant to speak, struggled with vocabulary, mispronounced words, and displayed limited confidence during classroom activities. For instance, students in groups such as AAA, FTS, and NM scored particularly low in participation and pronunciation, reflecting their anxiety and lack of familiarity with speaking English. Interview feedback from this stage confirmed these observations, as students reported feeling nervous, unsure about their vocabulary, and reluctant to speak in front of the class. These findings highlight the challenges students faced in oral communication before the implementation of the Cake application and provided a clear basis for designing targeted interventions in Cycle I.

After implementing the Cake application in Cycle I and continuing to Cycle II, the observation results showed significant improvements in all measured aspects. By Cycle II, students demonstrated higher participation, engagement, and more accurate pronunciation, with most students scoring high on the observation rubric. Grouped results, such as AMK, ECR, EM, and others, indicate that previously hesitant students became more confident, actively participated in dialogues, and were able to imitate native-speaker pronunciation effectively. Interviews conducted during this stage reinforced these findings, as students expressed increased motivation, enjoyment in speaking tasks, and improved fluency and vocabulary usage. Furthermore, the table 3 below give an overall insight on the Cake application implementation result.

Table 3. Average Score on All Students

Category	Cycle I Avg	Cycle II Avg
Participation	2.18	4.55
Engagement	2.18	4.55
Pronunciation	2.45	4.70

The average scores of all students indicate a significant improvement from Cycle I to Cycle II in all observed categories. In Cycle I, students' participation and engagement were both low, with average scores of 2.18, suggesting that many students were hesitant to actively participate in classroom speaking activities. Pronunciation was slightly higher at 2.45, indicating that while some students could pronounce words correctly, overall fluency and accuracy were limited.

By Cycle II, after the implementation of the Cake application, the average scores for participation and engagement increased markedly to 4.55, showing that students became more confident, motivated, and willing to actively engage in speaking tasks. Pronunciation also improved significantly to 4.70, reflecting better accuracy, intonation, and the ability to imitate native speakers. This trend demonstrates that the Cake application effectively enhanced students' overall speaking skills, fostering a more interactive and supportive classroom environment that encourages oral communication.

Reflection and Evaluation Stages

The results of this study indicate that the use of the Cake application as a learning medium produced a significant improvement in the speaking skills of students in Class VII B at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan. Before the intervention, students showed limited vocabulary, mispronunciation, low fluency and confidence, and hesitancy to speak in class, as confirmed by the pre-test average score of 56.51% and observation data showing low participation and engagement. These pre-intervention difficulties reflect well-known challenges in EFL contexts, where lack of exposure and limited practice opportunities often constrain oral proficiency (Pelenkahu, 2007).

After implementing Cake through two cycles of Classroom Action Research (CAR), the post-test II average rose to 75.15%, with 24 out of 33 students (72.73%) reaching the mastery criterion. Observation scores likewise improved markedly: average participation and engagement rose from 2.18 to 4.55, and pronunciation from 2.45 to 4.70. Interviews supported these quantitative and observational gains: students reported increased confidence, enjoyment of speaking practice, and perceived improvement in pronunciation and vocabulary use. These results suggest that Cake, by offering multimedia, native-speaker models, and flexible practice, helped overcome earlier barriers to speaking.

These findings align with a growing body of evidence supporting Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for improving EFL speaking skills. A recent systematic review found that mobile applications significantly enhance speaking performance, vocabulary, pronunciation, and learner motivation (Siregar, et al, 2024). Similarly, a study on speech recognition,based MALL showed that apps providing immediate feedback can improve EFL learners' pronunciation, fluency, and confidence by offering real-time error correction in a low-anxiety environment

(Handikaningtyas, 2025). Another recent study demonstrated that AI-powered mobile applications significantly boost speaking performance, particularly pronunciation and fluency, as compared to conventional digital tools (Humanities & Social Sciences Communications, 2025).

Beyond linguistic gains, the positive shift in students' confidence and willingness to speak supports previous claims that MALL can also address affective barriers in language learning. For example, mobile-based speaking applications have been found to reduce anxiety and increase learners' willingness to communicate by allowing repeated, self-paced practice without fear of peer judgment (Ridho & Reftyawati, 2025). In this study, students' improved participation and self-reported comfort in speaking suggest that Cake helped create a more supportive and motivating learning environment.

Taken together, the data from speaking tests, classroom observation, and interviews support the conclusion that integrating the Cake application into a structured CAR framework can be an effective strategy for improving junior high students' oral English skills. This underscores the pedagogical value of combining interactive mobile applications with reflective, iterative teaching cycles, a combination that seems particularly promising for under-resourced EFL settings, where traditional speaking practice opportunities may be limited.

Furthermore, the success of this study highlights the importance of integrating digital tools like Cake with communicative and student-centered pedagogy. Research has shown that meaningful speaking improvement occurs when technology is supported by structured classroom interaction, teacher scaffolding, and opportunities for peer collaboration (Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg, 2022). In this study, the CAR cycles enabled the teacher to adapt instruction based on student progress, refine vocabulary and pronunciation activities, and incorporate pair-work and role-play alongside the app's pronunciation and speaking drills. This combination aligns with findings that blended mobile learning, where apps complement classroom instruction, produces greater gains in speaking skills than app use alone (Shadiev & Yang, 2020). Moreover, the use of repeated practice, multimodal input, and speech-recognition feedback reflects current principles of effective mobile-assisted speaking instruction (Zou & Xie, 2021). Thus, the improvement observed in Cycle II not only validates the pedagogical effectiveness of the Cake application but also illustrates how mobile applications can support iterative instructional improvement within action research settings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of this Classroom Action Research, it can be concluded that the use of the Cake application significantly improved the speaking skills of Class VII B students at SMP Negeri 1 Wewewa Selatan. Quantitative data from the pre-test and post-tests showed a clear progression, with the average score increasing from 56.51% in the pre-test to 75.15% in post-test II, indicating that most students reached the mastery criterion. Observation and interview data confirmed that students became more active, confident, and engaged in speaking activities. Pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, and willingness to communicate showed notable improvements, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating interactive mobile applications into classroom practice.

Beyond the immediate results, this research suggests new directions for enhancing speaking instruction. First, combining mobile applications like Cake with collaborative speaking activities, such as peer dialogue or group presentations, could further strengthen communication skills and learner confidence. Second, integrating personalized progress tracking and AI feedback could provide tailored scaffolding for students with varying proficiency levels. Third, the positive impact on motivation and engagement highlights the potential for technology-mediated learning to address affective barriers, such as anxiety and shyness, which often hinder oral performance. Future research could explore these approaches, including longitudinal studies to examine sustained improvements in speaking skills, or comparative studies using different mobile applications to identify which features most effectively support language learning.

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