

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

Nguyen Phuong Linh¹, Nguyen Ha Kieu², Nguyen Bao Ngoc³, Pham Thi Kieu Oanh^{*4}

^{1,2,3,4}Thai Nguyen University of Education, Vietnam

Corresponding author: Pham Thi Kieu Oanh, PhD in English studies

ABSTRACT: This study discovered the effectiveness of the EAPTalk platform in enhancing the speaking performance of secondary school students. The study involved speaking tests provided by the platform and testing students using the app, thus aiming to assess their speaking performance utilizing the platform's features. 100 Grade 8 students participated in the survey, and only 30 joined an eight-week program, during which they used the EAPTalk platform to practice speaking English. To evaluate the impact, pre-and post-tests, mainly speaking questions provided by the app, were conducted to measure their speaking performance. In addition, pre- and post-questionnaires are administered to gather data on students' earlier perceptions of speaking skills and their feedback on their experiences using the platform. The findings illustrated a subtle improvement in speaking performance, with students gaining more insights on enhancing their speaking skills by getting breakdown scores on specific, IELTS-based criteria. Thus, they found ways to improve their speaking skills. The survey results also compared students' perception of English speaking before and after using the platform, showing that the app helped them improve their speaking skills. Based on these results, we recommend EAPTalk be an application to enhance speaking performance among secondary school students.

KEYWORDS: speaking performance, EAPTalk, improvement, perception, attitudes.

INTRODUCTION

In a developing country like Vietnam, Vietnamese people, especially young people, must learn and master this language to get the benefits above. Therefore, they can fulfill their dreams and duties in developing their home country. Regarding the role of English among young Vietnamese students (Ly, 2022), English is taught very early. Also, many young Vietnamese people have become aware of the importance of finding quality jobs, communicating with the foreign world, and approaching scientific sources they are pursuing. This reflects a national effort to prepare Vietnamese students for a globalized world. Also, English has always been a privileged part of Vietnam's general school education curriculum. In a study by Hoang (2010), English was introduced nationally as a compulsory subject at upper secondary level (from grade 10-12), three periods per week, making up a total of about 300 periods, and an optional subject at lower secondary level depending on the school's availability of resources. Regarding work labor and career opportunities, in modernization, industrialization, integration, and globalization, Vietnamese people have more opportunities to improve their studies and be encouraged to work harder to be better at social demands (Phan, 2009). In particular, this means that Vietnamese people must be fluent in English, as this language is a must when working in an international environment.

In this study, the researchers focused on speaking skills and speaking performance. Speaking is one of the core components of English language studies, along with listening, reading, and writing. Speaking skills also take the role of language studies as an output skill. Concerning speaking skills, Luoma (2004) involves more than the mere production of words; they are interactive processes that require both linguistic knowledge and the ability to communicate effectively in different contexts. Overall, speaking skills serve as a way for people to express their ideas and information to exchange with others and learn new knowledge through a cognitive process called "speaking."

Learning a language is not an easy task. Like all languages, learning English may be a comprehensive thing to complete and take a reasonable period to master. Demie (2012) pointed out that developing academic English proficiency takes 5–7 years. Also, speaking about ELL students, by Hakuta and Witt (2000), oral proficiency can take 3-5 years to develop, and academic English can take 4-7 years. Mentioning speaking skills and mastering this skill may be difficult for all learners from all proficiency levels due to numerous factors. Those factors may be varied due to both linguistic and cultural contexts. In this study,

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

the researchers focus on four main factors: (1) Pronunciation difficulties, (2) Grammar criterion, (3) Lack of vocabulary, and (4) Lack of frequent practice.

The researchers conducted this scientific research to find the best way to solve the difficulties of improving speaking skills. Using EAPTalk, an app designed with AI-assisted tools, the researchers believe that it can help students improve their speaking skills. The research aimed to promote secondary school students' speaking performance through EAPTalk.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 below depicts the theoretical framework for this study.

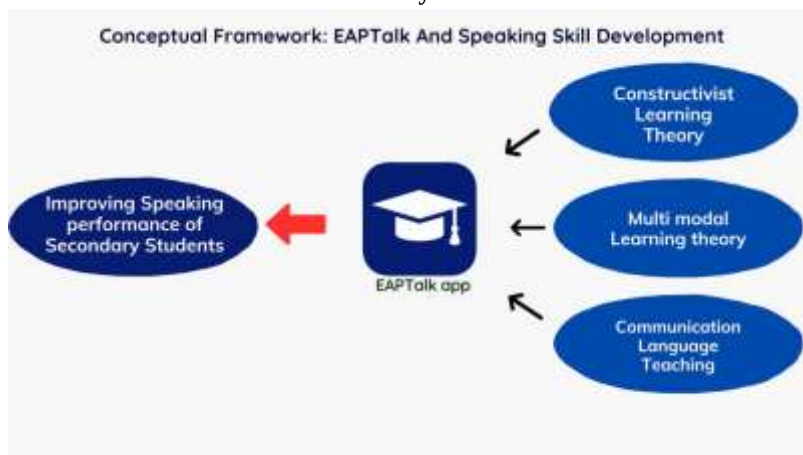


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: EAPTalk and Speaking skill development

The integration of three fundamental learning theories forms the basis of this study's conceptual framework. Together, these theories support the pedagogical use of the EAPTalk application to improve secondary school students' speaking performance.

First, the significance of engagement, meaningful conversation, and fluency in language acquisition is emphasized by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). By providing learners with contextualized dialogues and simulated speaking exercises that encourage real-life language use, the EAPTalk app exemplifies CLT principles.

Second, according to the constructivist learning theory, students actively create knowledge through reflective practice and self-directed interaction (Jonassen, 1991). By practicing speaking at their own pace, getting immediate feedback, and editing their work based on self-evaluation, EAPTalk empowers students to take charge of their education. This learner-centered method encourages independence and a more thorough internalization of speaking performance.

Thirdly, the theory of multimodal learning emphasizes how multisensory input can help with learning. The EAPTalk app uses interactive, textual, visual, and audio elements to engage students in a more dynamic and thought-provoking way. This multimodal setting promotes the development of fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and word retention (Moreno & Mayer, 2007).

These three theoretical underpinnings come together in the EAPTalk application, which serves as a pedagogical and technological tool. Ultimately, the software helps students' speaking abilities at the lower secondary level by operationalizing the concepts of communicative, autonomous, and multimodal learning.

METHODOLOGY

The research aimed to determine the effectiveness of the EAPTalk application in enhancing students' speaking performance at Quyet Thang Secondary School. Thus, this study is true-experimental, using a mixed-method research design, which investigates the impact of middle school students' speaking skills on the EAPTalk platform, including quantitative and qualitative research instruments and experimental settings.

The study's participants consisted of 100 middle school students who participated in the survey, but only 30 voluntarily participated in the experiment. In this study, the subjects consisted of 30 students from Quyet Thang Secondary School, who were chosen to join the experiment in investigating the effectiveness of the EAPTalk application in improving English-speaking performance. The participants were selected based on their interest in learning English and availability to commit to an 8-week experiment. It represented a mix of different English-speaking levels and provided a balanced and realistic sample for examining the impact of mobile-assisted language learning.

Data was collected through pre- and post-questionnaires and pre-and post-tests. These were created to evaluate the effectiveness of using the EAPTalk application to learn English speaking skills. Quantitative and qualitative analysis methods assessed students' attitudes and views on the study. In this study, the researchers used questionnaires and tests to determine the impact of the learners' speaking performance through the EAPTalk application on platforms.

FINDINGS

The current situation of students' English-speaking performance

Figure 2 below depicts students' perceptions of English-speaking performance. This data provides a profound insight into the attitude, motivation, strategy, and difficulties students in Quyet Thang Secondary School face when they learn English, especially speaking skills. Specifically, the details bring awareness about their issues.

Data shows that the necessity of English-speaking skills was highly appreciated, with 40.54% of participants agreeing with this experiment and 24.32% agreeing with this viewpoint. Students' perceptions of English-speaking performance. This data provides a profound insight into the attitude, motivation, strategy, and difficulties students in Quyet Thang Secondary School face when they learn English, especially speaking skills. Specifically, the details bring awareness about their issues. Data shows that the necessity of English-speaking skills was highly appreciated, with 40.54% of participants agreeing with this experiment and 24.32% agreeing with this viewpoint.

According to the charts, approximately 41.8% of students are interested in speaking English in class; in detail, 23.2% strongly agreed, and 18.6% agreed with that. Yet, the rest are not enjoying learning to speak English, which is a significant problem in this integrated century. This data is followed by six students who cannot determine if they like learning English and 13 students who are not keen on speaking English. Besides, more than half of them knew their English had improved after the past year, but 16 other students thought their skill was worsening.

While more than 70% of these participants acknowledge that they might need to make an effort to learn English speaking, only about 18 students (51%) practice English during classes, and no participants strongly oppose this viewpoint. Moreover, comfort in speaking with foreigners is low, with 45.71% disagreeing, 28.57% strongly disagreeing, and no respondents strongly agreeing with feeling comfortable. Finally, 42.85% of participants are registered to be satisfied with their current speaking skills, with 17.14% strongly agreeing and 25.71% agreeing. Yet, 20% were not pleased with their speaking performance, and 8.57% completely disagreed, which is known as they were too unconfident to speak English at that moment. Thus, data expressed that most participants are keen on English, especially speaking performance, but few students are concerned about this skill.

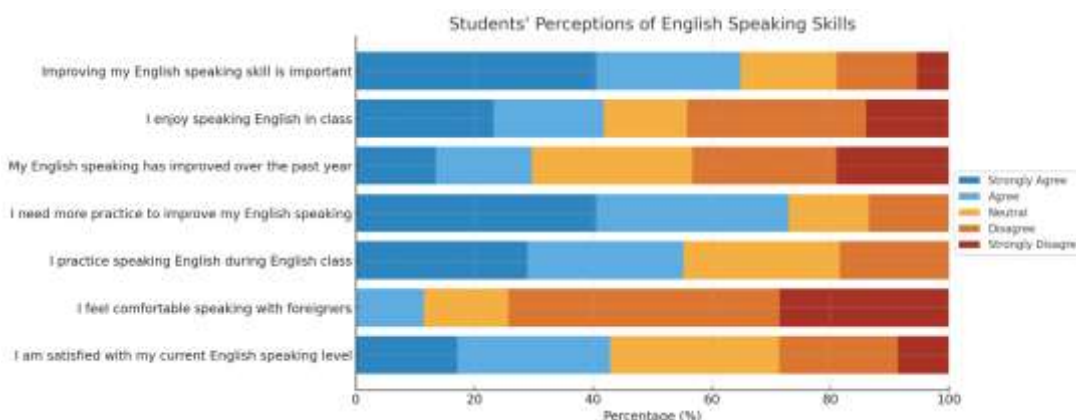


Figure 2. Students' perceptions of English-speaking performance

Students' challenges in learning English-speaking skill

Figure 3 below shows students' challenges in learning to speak English skills. The data reveals several significant challenges that students face in their English-speaking skills. Several respondents struggled with arranging their thoughts while speaking. Specifically, 32.43% of the participants agreed, and 27.03% strongly agreed that they found it challenging to organize their ideas coherently, which suggests a significant barrier to effective communication.

Fluency issues were also noticed, with 40.54% of the participants strongly agreeing and 32.43% agreeing that they had difficulty speaking English fluently. Additionally, 35.14% strongly agreed, and 27.03% agreed. A proportion expressed that they struggled with expressing their thoughts clearly when presenting in English. Thus, these findings provided information on the percentage of students having challenges speaking English, preventing them from creativity and brainstorming.

The data shows that 27.03% strongly agreed, and 32.43% agreed they face difficulties remembering and using English grammar structures while speaking. This means grammatical accuracy remains a common issue affecting their confidence and fluency in English communication.

Pronunciation concerns also emerged as a significant problem. In detail, about 21.62% strongly agreed, and 27.03% of participants agreed that their English accent makes it difficult for others to understand them. Additionally, it is noticed that 35.14% of students strongly agreed, and 27.03% of students agreed that their native accent negatively impacts their pronunciation and confidence. A high percentage (45.95%) of respondents remained neutral regarding their pronunciation mistakes, which expresses their lack of constructive feedback to help them develop.

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

Embarrassment is also a problem affecting students' speaking performance. Shame causes mental reactions, making students speak less fluently; shy students cannot express their thoughts consciously and sometimes misunderstand others. Therefore, the mental problem needs to be improved for more efficient communication. Besides, 43.24% of students and 27.03% of students were recorded to agree and agree strongly, respectively, that they feel not confident when pronouncing English words that are not the same as native speakers.

Additionally, motivation plays a significant factor in promoting students' English-speaking performance. A notable 29.73% strongly agreed, and 32.43% agreed they lack motivation in English class. This lack of enthusiasm could impact their learning outcomes, making it more challenging for them to practice speaking actively.

In conclusion, the data shows students struggle with fluency, grammar usage, pronunciation, and confidence while speaking English. The findings also indicate that motivation plays a crucial role in English-speaking performance. These challenges, through mental interventions, such as being shy in speaking English, which affects their pronunciation, and confidence-building activities, could significantly enhance students' English-speaking skills and overall language proficiency.

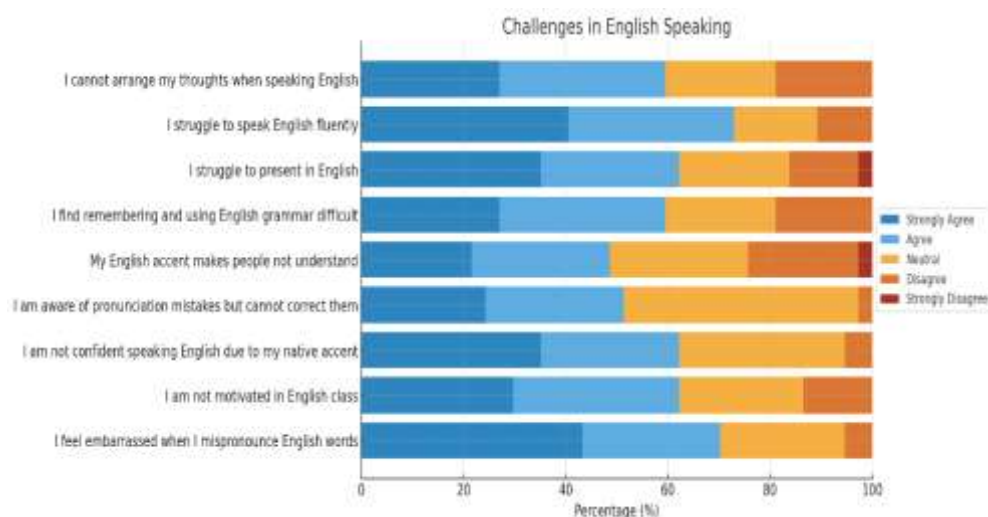


Figure 3. Students' challenges in learning speaking English skill

Table 1 depicts students' pre-test scores in experimental group and control group. The data of the experiment group revealed that most students scored 3 out of 9 points, meaning most were in the A2 level. While the highest score was 4, achieved by S2, which was classified as the B1 level, the lowest score was 2, co-responding to the A1 level, belonging to S9. Ranging from 2 to 4, the scores indicate a diversity in the speaking level of the experimental group. According to the table, the average score of the experimental group was 2.9, which approximately falls under the A2 level.

No	Respondents	Max score	Experimental group		Control group	
			Scores	Level	Scores	
1	S1	9	3	A2	2.5	A1
2	S2	9	4	B1	3	A2
3	S3	9	2,5	A1	3	A2
4	S4	9	3	A2	3	A2
5	S5	9	3	A2	2.5	A1
6	S6	9	2,5	A1	3.5	A2
7	S7	9	3	A2	3	A2
8	S8	9	3,5	A2	2.5	A1
9	S9	9	2	A1	3	A2
10	S10	9	3	A2	2.5	A1
11	S11	9	3	A2	4	B1
12	S12	9	3	A2	3	A2
13	S13	9	2,5	A1	3	A2
14	S14	9	2,5	A1	3.5	A2
15	S15	9	3	A2	3	A2
	Mean score		2.90		3.00	

Table 1. Students' pre-test scores in experimental group and control group

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

Looking at the pre-test scores, there were relative similarities between the experimental and control groups. The most common classifications were levels A1, A2, and B1. This distribution of scores ranged from 2 to 4. A higher concentration of students at the A2 level was equivalent to a three-score. While the lowest score of 2.5 was recorded for S1, S5, S8, and S10, S11 achieved a score of 4, placing them in the B1 level category.

This table illustrates a diverse distribution of scores and proficiency levels among the experimental and control group students. Based on the data, the control group's mean score was calculated to be 3, which showed that the control group performed slightly better than the experimental group.

From the data obtained, the following descriptive table and bar chart demonstrate the initial speaking skill level of the students in the experimental group and control groups for a more direct comparison of two groups.

No	CERF level	Score ranges	Experimental group		Control group	
			Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
1	A1	0 - 2.5	5	33.3%	4	26.7%
2	A2	3 – 3.5	9	60%	10	66.6%
3	B1	4 – 5	1	6.7%	1	6.7%
4	B2	5.5 – 6.5	0	0%	0	0%
5	C1	7 – 8	0	0%	0	0%
6	C2	8.5 - 9	0	0%	0	0%
Total			15	100%	15	100%

Table 2. The classification of students' scores on pre-test

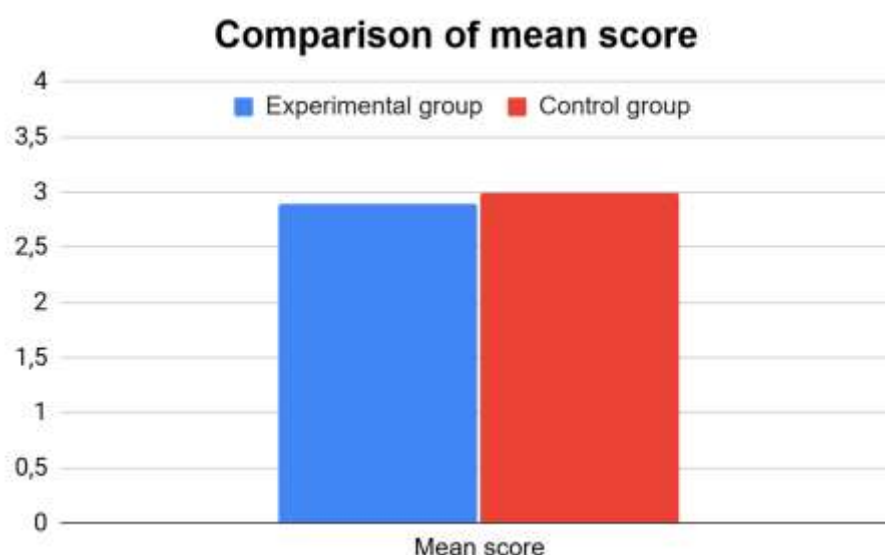


Figure 4. Participants' average initial scores in both groups

The pre-test results revealed the baseline speaking skill levels of the experimental and control groups before the intervention. While there were discrepancies in levels A1 and A2, the B1 level category showed identical proportions across both groups, accounting for 6.7%. The highest percentage was recorded in the A2 level, as indicated by 9 (60%) and 10 (66.6%) out of 15 students classified in this category in the experimental and control group, respectively. Meanwhile, barely any students are classified further than level B1 in both groups.

The data compared the experimental and control groups regarding mean scores. Although a small discrepancy existed between the groups' average scores, as the experimental group's score was 2.9, which is 0.1 percent lower than the control group's, recorded as 3, there was barely a variation in the distribution of scores and proficiency levels between the two groups in the initial stages of the research process.

Impact of EAPTalk app on students' speaking performance

Figure 5 below presents average score of practice tests. The above line graph compares the average speaking score of 15 students using EAPTalk from the experimental group. At first glance, the graph shows a subtle improvement in speaking performance from Week 1 to Week 8.



Figure 5. Average score of practice tests

Starting with 2.87, the average speaking performance score using EAPTalk slightly decreased to 2.83 in Week 2, showcasing a minor decline. Then, students' EAPTalk usage proved its improvement in Week 3, in which the average score rose from 2.83 to 3.03.

In the following weeks, the upward trend continued as the average score increased slightly from 3.03 to 3.10 at the end of the second phase of the experiment period, Week 4. Then, the average score peaked at 3.3 and remained at that peak in Week 5 and Week 6. Subsequently, the average score of students' speaking performance witnessed a slight decline from 3.3 to 3.23 in Week 7 and 3.2 in Week 8. Though experiencing subtle fluctuations, the figure for the average score showcased the fact that EAPTalk showed its practicality in helping students enhance their overall speaking performance, including various aspects, namely accuracy, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

Admittedly, integrating EAPTalk can be a practical approach for students by providing opportunities to enhance their speaking performance through exercises from EAPTalk's resources. Also, by seeing breakdown scores in each speaking performance, students can analyze their speaking aspects and find ways to improve overall speaking performance and speaking skills.

The following table shows the post-test scores of the students after using the EAPTalk platform to improve their speaking skills. The collected data showed that most experimental group students scored from 3 to 3.5, which is the A2 level. S2 recorded the highest score of 4.5, corresponding to the level B1 in the post-test. Only one student was classified as level A1 with a score of 2.5, which is S13. Overall, the group's performance can be described as level A2, as the mean score was 3.27.

The table also depicts the post-test scores of students in the control group. It was evident that A2 was the most frequently observed level among the respondents. The majority of students scored from 3 to 3.5 on the test. The highest score was 4, achieved by S11, which was classified as level B1. A score of 2.5 was recorded as the lowest in the group, assigned to S1, S5, S8, and S10. According to the classification table, the mean score corresponds to the A2 level.

	Students	Max score	Experimental group		Control group	
			Scores	Level	Scores	Level
1	S1	9	3.5	A2	2.5	A1
2	S2	9	4.5	B1	3	A2
3	S3	9	3	A2	3	A2
4	S4	9	3.5	A2	3	A2
5	S5	9	3	A2	2.5	A1
6	S6	9	3	A2	3.5	A2
7	S7	9	3.5	A2	3	A2
8	S8	9	3.5	A2	2.5	A1
9	S9	9	3	A2	3.5	A2
10	S10	9	3	A2	2.5	A1
11	S11	9	3.5	A2	4	B1
12	S12	9	3	A2	3	A2
13	S13	9	2.5	A1	3	A2
14	S14	9	3	A2	3.5	A2
15	S15	9	3.5	A2	3	A2
	Mean score		3.27		3.03	

Table 3. Students' post-test scores in experimental group and control group

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

Table 4 and Figure 6 below comparing the speaking skill scores of the experimental and control groups after the research period were included.

No	CERF level	Score ranges	Experimental group		Control group	
			Frequency	Proportion	Frequency	Proportion
1	A1	0 - 2.5	1	6.67%	4	26.67%
2	A2	3 – 3.5	13	86.66%	10	66.66%
3	B1	4 – 5	1	6.67%	1	6.67%
4	B2	5.5 – 6.5	0	0%	0	0%
5	C1	7 – 8	0	0%	0	0%
6	C2	8.5 - 9	0	0%	0	0%
Total			15	100%	15	100%

Table 4. The classification of students' scores on post-test

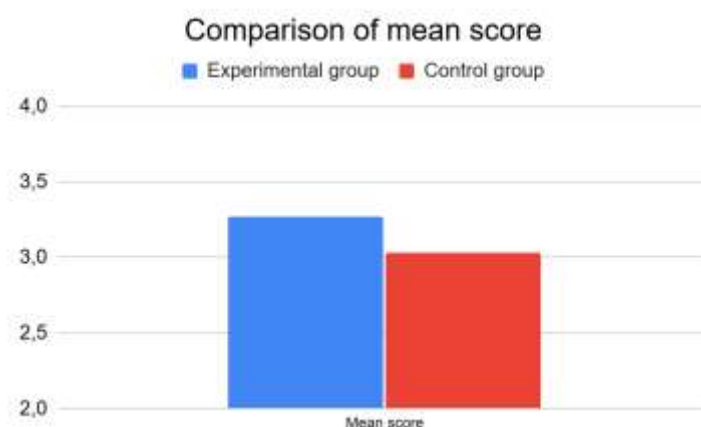


Figure 6. Participants' average scores after the research period

Compared to the control group, the experimental group showed a positive impact of the EAPTalk platform. The average score reached 3.27 in the experimental group, whereas it was only 3 in the control group. A significant proportion of students in the experimental and control groups were categorized as level A2. However, the experimental group had three more students achieving scores from 3 to 3.5, compared to 10 students from the control group. While the control group had more students rated level A1, the experimental group showed better performance, with only one student scoring 2.5 out of 9. The data indicates that the EAPTalk platform contributed to a noticeable improvement in learning outcomes.

To determine the effectiveness of the research period, students' scores in the pre-test and post-test were compared. Figure 7 below depicts the improvement of the experimental group and control group after the research period.

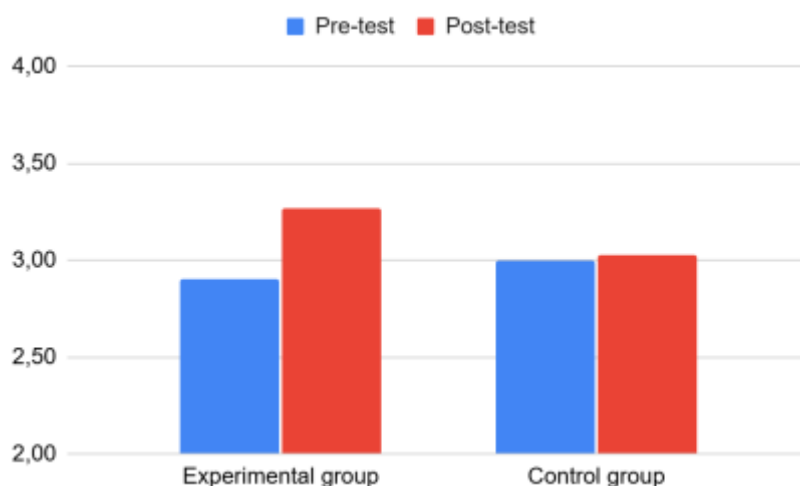


Figure 7. Participants' average score before and after the research period

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

Before using EAPTalk, participants' average scores were classified as level A1 in the experimental group and A2 in the control group, with scores of 2.9 and 3, respectively. The average scores of both groups were approximately equal, with the experimental group's mean score being 0.1 points lower than that of the control group. Additionally, the data depicted a gain of scores in the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the experimental and control groups after using the EAPTalk platform. A clear improvement can be observed in the experimental group's results in the post-test. While the control group, with a mean score of 3.03, remains a similar score between the pre-test and post-test, the experimental group has an average score of 3.27, almost 1.08 times higher.

Therefore, more students in the experimental group with speaking skills were classified as having levels from A1 to B2 compared to the control group. Using the EAPTalk platform substantially impacted the experimental group's speaking skills. In other words, the experimental group benefited more from the research process, as evidenced by the disparity of 0.37 between the experimental group's pre-test and post-test mean scores. Meanwhile, the control group's score also increased while not involved in the experiment, with 0.03 points in the post-test, slightly higher than its pre-test mean score. This means that although students might improve their speaking skills with other teaching methods, their progress was not as remarkable as in the experimental group.

Students' attitudes towards using EAPTalk platform in learning speaking

The qualitative method was expressed in the research post-questionnaires. In detail, the general effects of the EAPTalk app in improving students' speaking skills and the answers to open questions provide deeper insights into user preferences and challenges. When asked about their favorite feature, students mentioned different things that improved their learning. One student said they liked the scoring function the most because it helped them know their English level. This shows that giving scores or feedback can motivate learners and help them understand what they need to improve. It also allows them to follow their progress and set goals for themselves.

When participants were asked about their favorite function of the app, students highlighted several aspects that contributed positively to their learning experience. S1 shared that

"I like scoring function, it helped me aware of my level at the moment"

because it helped them become aware of their current proficiency level. This shows that the motivational and diagnostic potential of self-assessment tools is unchangeable for language learning apps. By giving scores or evaluations quickly, users can check their progress and set personalized goals, which creates the principles of learner autonomy in mobile-assisted language learning. Moreover, S2 felt that the app had a good interface that is easy for people to follow

"I like the interface of the application, easy to follow."

A smooth interface plays an important role in maintaining users' interests, especially for high school students who may become easily frustrated with poorly designed systems. Meanwhile, S3 valued the speed of the app's response system

"I like the speed of resulting, it was fast to use"

which stated that results were delivered quickly, which allowed for more efficient practice sessions.

Thus, most students recognized the EAPTalk app as a beneficial tool for developing their speaking performance. The app was perceived as applicable, and its role in language practice is broadly acknowledged. The small percentage of disagreement might stem from individual preferences or technical difficulties.

However, the data also revealed several technical and pedagogical challenges. Student 4 noted that the app was occasionally slow and lagged, which sometimes distracted them and cracked the flow of speaking practice. These issues partly prevented learners from using the app consistently. Furthermore, S5 and S7 both raised the concern that the app lacks Vietnamese language support, making it difficult for some users to understand instructions or AI-generated responses fully. This barrier highlights the importance of localization in educational technology, especially when targeting non-native English speakers.

Furthermore, S6 reported that some topics were too advanced or unsuitable for their level. This suggests the need for content differentiation and adaptive learning pathways to ensure that materials align with students' proficiency and interests. The inability to relate to topic content may demotivate learners or create confusion during conversations.

Mentioning educational applications, especially for language learners who may not be tech-savvy, a clean and intuitive user interface is essential. Student 15 reinforces this by saying:

"The app is easy to use, even for someone who is not good with technology."

Efficiency in providing feedback is also valued by users. Student 3 mentioned:

"I like the speed of resulting, it was fast to use. I enjoy using EAPTalk after school because it's fun and fast."

This suggests that the app's performance speed is a critical factor in maintaining engagement, especially for students with short attention spans or limited time. The app's role in providing structured speaking opportunities is highlighted by multiple students. Student 8 noted:

"I like EAPTalk because it helps me practice speaking with clear topics. I feel more confident to speak in class after using the app."

Enhancing Secondary School Students' Speaking Performance Via EAPTalk App

This demonstrates the app's potential in boosting speaking fluency and classroom participation. An additional benefit is the ability to hear one's own speech. Student 16 wrote:

"I like that I can hear myself speak and listen again."

This feature promotes meta-cognitive awareness and self-correction. Moreover, collaborative learning is supported, as Student 2 said:

"I like using it with my friends. We compare scores and learn together."

Peer learning can enhance motivation and foster a sense of community among users. Student 18 shared:

"It helps me remember words better because I use them to speak."

This indicates the app's effectiveness in reinforcing vocabulary through repeated and contextualized usage. Student 22 added:

"The timer helps me speak faster and more fluently."

The time-based feature may simulate real-life communication conditions, encouraging students to think and respond quickly.

Despite its advantages, students also reported several challenges when using the EAPTalk app. These difficulties include technical issues, language accessibility barriers, content suitability, and the quality of AI-generated feedback. Performance-related problems were mentioned by multiple users. Student 4 expressed:

"Sometimes it was too slow and lagged to use. It's hard when the app is slow or when the internet is not good."

These issues can significantly affect user experience, particularly in areas with unstable internet connectivity. A notable number of students reported difficulties due to the absence of Vietnamese translation. Student 5 stated:

"It doesn't have Vietnamese translate, only Chinese and English. I don't understand the responses of the app. It doesn't have Vietnamese translation."

and Student 7:

"Some of the AI answers are hard to understand without Vietnamese."

Language accessibility is a major concern for beginner to intermediate learners, who may require their native language for better comprehension. Some students expressed dissatisfaction with the difficulty and relevance of certain topics. Student 6 said:

"Some topics are hard and not suitable for students to use. I think the app is useful, but some topics are too hard for me."

Content complexity needs to be aligned with learners' proficiency levels to ensure that they are neither overwhelmed nor disengaged. Moreover, Student 19 shared:

"The app sometimes repeats topics, and I want more new ones. I feel bored if the topic is not fun, like talking about science."

These responses point to a need for content variety and personalization. Several students found the feedback from the app's AI to be unclear or unhelpful. Student 7 remarked:

"Sometimes I don't understand the feedback from the AI."

Others echoed similar sentiments which suggest a need for more human-like or simplified feedback. Student 2 also pointed out:

"I think the app should give more suggestions for better answers."

Therefore, AI responses could support learning more effectively. Apart from technical and pedagogical aspects, the app has psychological impacts on learners. Student 9 said:

"Sometimes I feel nervous to talk, but the app makes it more comfortable."

The ability to practice speaking in a private, low-pressure environment can help anxious students improve their speaking confidence. Student 5 noted:

"I think I speak more now than before I used the app."

As multiple students mentioned translation issues, the inclusion of Vietnamese for instructions, feedback, and topic explanations could make the app more accessible. This would particularly help beginners or those struggling with English comprehension. Students requested more varied and personalized content. Incorporating user-selected themes (e.g., hobbies, daily life) could enhance engagement. As Student 14 said:

"I like talking about daily life or hobbies because I know the words."

Efforts should be made to optimize app performance for lower quality of students' conditions. Offline or low-data modes could also be considered. Besides, gamification and multimedia were suggested by students such as Student 16:

"The app is good, but I think it should include games or videos too."

Interactive elements can improve motivation and engagement. In brief, the EAPTalk application has several benefits that support the development of English language speaking. Students highly appreciate its scoring system, usage, and immediate feedback. However, translation support, content difficulty, feedback quality, and app performance need further development. Thus, the app can become a more effective and inclusive tool for language learning. The insights gathered from these student responses provide a meaningful base for technological and pedagogical enhancements that can lead to more personalized and effective English-speaking practice. The EAPTalk app was recorded to be helpful with specific effects and positive participant feedback. However, its limitations in accessibility, language support, and content appropriateness need to be considered.

CONCLUSION

This research investigates the speaking skills of 8th-grade students and shows the impact of the EAPTalk application as a support tool to help students promote their English-speaking skills. Through a combination of pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, pre-test, and post-test, the research examines students' attitudes, challenges, and progress throughout the learning process.

The pre-questionnaire illustrates that most students know the importance of improving their speaking skills, with 64.86% expressing strong agreement. However, many had difficulties in organizing thoughts (59.46%), fluency (72.97%), pronunciation (62.17%), and using grammar correctly (59.46%) while speaking. Mental health also played a significant role, with a majority expressing embarrassment, lack of confidence, and concern about their native accent. These issues expressed cognitive and emotional factors impacting students' speaking performance.

Therefore, the EAPTalk app was introduced to help learners overcome these challenges. The app also allows students to practice speaking in a more flexible and less stressful environment. According to post-questionnaire results, 72.97% of students agreed that the app was helpful for their speaking practice, and 54.05% expressed using it regularly during their free time.

However, it is noted that not all students used the app consistently. While some students showed evident progress, others felt passive or unmotivated. This highlights the need for better integration of mobile apps for improving English into classroom activities, which are controlled by educators.

In conclusion, the EAPTalk app has proven to be a helpful resource for secondary school students to promote English-speaking skills. The study supports the use of mobile applications as a complement to traditional classroom instruction.

REFERENCES

- 1) Demie, F. (2012). English as an additional language pupils: how long does it take to acquire English fluency? *Language and Education*, 27(1), 59–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2012.682580>.
- 2) Jonassen, D. H. (1991). Evaluating Constructivist Learning. *Educational Technology*, 31(9), 28–33.
- 3) Hakuta, K. (2000). How long does it take English learners to attain proficiency.
- 4) Hoang, V.V. (2010). The Current Situation and Issues of the Teaching of English in Vietnam. (In) *Ritsumeikan Studies in Language and Culture*, 22(1), 7-18.
- 5) Luoma, S. (2004). Assessing speaking. *Ernst Klett Sprachen*.
- 6) Ly, C. K. (2022). English as a Global Language: An Exploration of EFL Learners' Beliefs in Vietnam. Available at SSRN 4895696.
- 7) Moreno, R., & Mayer, R. E. (2007). Interactive multimodal learning environments. *Educational Psychology Review*, 19(3), 309–326.
- 8) Phan, T. T. H. (2009). Impacts of Vietnam's social context on learners' attitudes towards foreign languages and English language learning: Implications for teaching and learning. *Asian EFL Journal*, 11(4), 169-188.
- 9) Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.