Students' Perception on Tandem: Language Exchange Application As a Learning Media to Improve Speaking Skills

Nurul Mifta Lubis[1], Emeliya Sukma Dara Damanik[2], Maryati Salmiah[3]
nurulmiftahlbs@gmail.com, emeliya@uinsu.ac.id, maryatisalmiah@uinsu.ac.id
[1,2,3] Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

Alamat: Jl. William Iskandar Ps. V, Medan Estate, Kec. Percut Sei Tuan, Kabupaten Deli Serdang, Sumatera Utara 20371
Korespondensi penulis: nurulmiftahlbs@gmail.com

Abstract. The research that has been carried out is entitled "Students' Perception on Tandem: Language Exchange Application as a Learning Media to Improve Speaking Skills", which is based on the fact that learning English is not only seen from the way teachers teach but also seen from students' perceptions. Nowadays, English language learning has been followed by technological developments, especially in the use of learning media. With the presence of applications as English learning media, it helps students overcome problems and improves students' English speaking skills. The research methodology uses qualitative methods. The research participants were five students in the eighth semester majoring in English Education at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. The technique for collecting participants was purposive sampling. From these results, the participants who have been obtained will be interviewed by writer. The data collection techniques used by researcher were questionnaires and in-depth interviews. And analyzed using qualitative data analysis. The results obtained reveal that (1) The Tandem application can be used as a tool to improve speaking skills, (2) Call & video call features are most helpful in improving speaking skills, and (3) The Tandem application is the most effective application for improving speaking skills. Based on the research findings above, students expressed positive perceptions regarding the use of the Tandem application as a learning media in improving students' speaking skills. The Tandem application improves students' speaking skills.

Keywords: tandem application, learning media, and speaking skills

Abstrak. Penelitian yang telah dilakukan berjudul "Persepsi Siswa tentang Tandem: Penerapan Pertukaran Bahasa sebagai Media Pembelajaran untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Berbicara", yang didasari oleh kenyataan bahwa pembelajaran bahasa Inggris tidak hanya dilihat dari cara guru mengajar tetapi juga dilihat dari cara guru mengajar. dari persepsi siswa. Pembelajaran bahasa Inggris saat ini telah diikuti dengan perkembangan teknologi, khususnya dalam penggunaan media pembelajaran. Dengan hadirnya aplikasi sebagai media pembelajaran bahasa Inggris membantu siswa mengatasi permasalahan dan meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris siswa. Metodologi penelitian menggunakan metode kualitatif. Partisipan penelitian adalah lima mahasiswa semester delapan jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris di Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara. Teknik pengumpulan partisipan adalah purposive sampling. Dari hasil tersebut, partisipan yang telah diperoleh akan diwawancarai oleh penulis. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan peneliti adalah angket dan wawancara mendalam. Dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis data kualitatif. Hasil yang diperoleh mengungkapkan bahwa (1) Aplikasi Tandem dapat digunakan sebagai alat untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara, (2) Fitur panggilan & video call paling membantu dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara, dan (3) Aplikasi Tandem merupakan aplikasi yang paling efektif untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara. Berdasarkan temuan penelitian di atas, siswa menyatakan persepsi positif mengenai penggunaan aplikasi Tandem sebagai media pembelajaran dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa. Aplikasi Tandem meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa.

Kata Kunci: penerapan tandem, media pembelajaran, dan keterampilan berbicara

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching speaking is very important in learning foreign languages, especially English. For years, teaching speaking in English has still not been effective for students. Teachers also still use old techniques when teaching speaking, namely memorizing dialogue and just repeating exercises. But nowadays, where times continue to develop, it requires students' speaking to improve. Students are expected to be able to speak due to the situation when speaking by following socio-cultural rules so that students can express themselves well when they speak. Speaking skills in language learning are an important part for students to continue to develop and become a main priority that must be mastered. The classroom is the key for students to learn a language. Basavarajiah has observed that "speech is the foundation; everything else is built upon it." However, a student's capacity to speak is influenced not only by classroom approaches, but also by other aspects such as motivation, proper vocabulary, and practice. However, speaking remains the most difficult ability for the majority of English learners to master, and many are still unable to communicate orally in English. One of the most difficult aspects of public speaking is learning from mistakes. Another difficulty is a lack of motivation. Students are demotivated and pay less attention to the oral course for a variety of reasons, including the repetition of uninteresting themes and exercises, as well as the use of outdated materials and approaches that require refreshing. In addition, most students struggle with a lack of experience (Naciri, 2019)

There have been several researchers who have studied the difficulties of ELF students in learning to speak. As the results of research in Turkey show that ELF students experience anxiety and are less willing when learning to speak, these are obstacles for students in speaking and this is the main obstacle experienced by ELF students in learning to speak. This anxiety and unwillingness can be caused by fear when students make mistakes in learning to speak in front of their friends. Students who have poor English skills feel more anxious and do not want to communicate in English class compared to students who have good English skills. Speaking, unlike reading, writing, and listening, involves some level of real-time audience participation. The students often feel nervous to speak in a foreign language in the classroom, either because they are worried about making mistakes or because they are afraid of the attention their speech will attract, and teachers frequently ask their students to express themselves in front of the entire class when teaching speaking. However, they should be aware that it can cause stress for students during speaking activities, therefore it is found that "foreign language classrooms

easily generate inhibitions and anxieties." This anxiety can prevent students from speaking comfortably in front of their friends. Therefore, teachers must be aware of paying attention to them in class (Naciri, 2019).

English is a global language that people use to interact with one another in all parts of their lives, including technology. Many people currently use language learning aids such as software, games, and so on. Language and technology work together to help pupils learn languages. According to Nyuyen (2022), education uses technology more than trade and transactions. According to Hussain (2018), the primary role of language is communication, and English is seen as an international language utilized in conferences, meetings, cultural exchanges, forums, and other contexts. Technology is a way of communicating. Students must improve their speaking skills in order to communicate effectively in English (Nguyen & Pham, 2022).

Hoopingarner (2009), on page 222, claims that "Best practices for using technology to support language teaching and learning view technology as a tool that can enhance teaching and learning by supplementing input, giving more chances for language practice, and serving as a platform for interaction and task- based learning activities." Computer software and mobile applications have also emerged as effective alternatives to traditional institutional language learning sessions (Nushi and Jenabzadeh, 2016). Technology has also provided language learners with a unique opportunity for practicing their chosen language both inside and outside of the classroom by interacting with others who are studying languages as well as native speakers (Odo, 2019). According to the TESOL Technology Standards (2008, p. 15), " the use of technology in English language education and learning can also stimulate the development of strategies important for modern survival, such as communication, teamwork, and information retrieval." (Nushi & Khazaei, 2020).

Among the various L2 learning tools, those designed primarily to improve speaking skills have attracted more attention. On the one hand, such software is in high demand since it allows L2 learners to not only acquire and practice the skill at their own pace (saving them time from attending genuine language lessons), but also to reflect on their work afterward. Many L2 teachers are cautious about computer and mobile technology replacing face-to-face contacts with the instructor, who provides the students' best model of proper usage (Blake, 2017, p. 107). That apprehension can be relieved if skeptics consider how improvements in computer and, notably, mobile technology (e.g., smartphones, iPads, tablets) are altering the quality of

oral instruction. They are fitted with sensitive speakers and microphones, allowing the installation of programs that correspond to the language learning needs of L2 learners, for example, improving their speaking skills. Such technology can also support classroom teachers by allowing them to provide additional assistance to their pupils with aural/oral abilities (Hincks, 2003; Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019).

Tandem is an important application developed to improve speaking skills. It improves learners' conversational abilities by forming a big community of language learners. Several people in the Tandem community want to impart knowledge of their native language and learn the target language from native speakers. Tandem communication is different from traditional classroom communication in that it allows both parties (students and professors) to discuss issues that are of interest to them. Because of the app's friendly and charming atmosphere, users are not scared to make mistakes and strive to learn from what happens during language exchanges. The primary reason for choosing Tandem as the topic of this study was its success in supporting language learners in developing their speaking skills, as indicated by its 4.3 Google Play rating (Nushi & Khazaei, 2020).

Apart from the methods and media used by teachers in teaching, there are other things that teachers must pay attention to, including regarding student perception. Some researchers have attempted to define "perceptions." The literature has some definitions of perceptions provided by various experts. Barry (1998) describes perception as the set of mechanisms by that we recognize, organize, and create stimuli in our surroundings. The basic distinction between the two major theories of perception is their emphasis on the roles of sensation and higher cognitive processes in perception. Lindsay and Norman (1997) also described perception as the process by which an organism evaluates and organizes sensations to form a meaningful experience of the environment. Furthermore, perception is the process of inputting a message or information into the human brain through the human perception, which constantly interacts with the environment. This relationship is established by the five senses: sight, emotion, smell, and touch (Slameto, 2003). Thus, perception can be defined as the process by which humans convey their senses and experiences or organize their interpretations to form a meaningful experience (Jumiaty & Kuswoyo, 2023).

Students' perceptions are increasingly being used in education for a variety of purposes, including better understanding specific aspects that influence the learning process. These perceptions also provide an important voice about learning circumstances, teaching efficacy,

and the success of the teaching assessment system (Chen & Hoshower, 2010; Schenke et al., 2017). Another study claimed that the students' factor had the greatest impact on student achievement (Elliot et al., 2019). Research findings on student views are becoming increasingly relevant as they provide new insights into teaching and learning (Zulaiha & Triana, 2023). With the availability of technology, such as the numerous programs designed to assist students in learning English, students will be able to improve their speaking skills. With this research topic, writer explained students' opinions on the usage of technology, specifically the impact of Tandem applications on students' speaking skills. This research is critical for improving students' foreign language skills, particularly their speaking skills. By investigating students' perceptions of the existence and usage of technology in learning, it will offer up new opportunities for students to learn foreign languages. Many researcher have investigated the impact of technology on students' foreign language skills, but few have discussed and researched the use of technology in foreign language learning from the perspective of the students. Researcher examined the impact of Tandem applications on students' speaking abilities from the perspective of the students.

2. LITERATURE RIVIEW

Speaking Skills

English speaking ability can enhance vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Daulay et al., 2021). Speaking abilities are a person's capacity to express ideas and thoughts to their interlocutor. The communication process seeks to convey a concept to the other person in order to receive a reaction from the information submitted. Speaking Learning is the process of training students to talk in good and truthful language, which is a complex capacity that involves several aspects, including willingness to learn, readiness to think, motivation, and guidance.

Learning Media

Learning media are intended to support the teaching and learning process. This viewpoint is supported by Azhar Arsyad (2002: 4), who defines learning media as media that provide instructional messages or include teaching goals, stimulating students to learn. Munadi (2013: 7) defines learning media as something that can carry or convey a message from a planned source in order to produce a suitable atmosphere for efficient and effective teaching and

learning. It may be concluded that learning media is a tool for facilitating the transmission of messages throughout the teaching and learning processes.

Learning media in the technology field can be found in a variety of contexts, one of which is social media. According to the McGraw Hill Dictionary, social media is a way for people to keep connected with one another. According to the McGraw Hill Dictionary, social media is a way for people to keep connected with one another. They can produce, share, and exchange information and ideas inside the virtual community. According to Taprial and Kanwar (2012), social media is a platform for people to be social by sharing photos, videos, and news about their activities with others. In this way, social media has a strong connection to communication. Social media as a communication tool allows everyone to reach out whenever they need to. It is possible to conclude that social media can be used as a learning media for increasing the student's speaking skills because social media is a platform of information and interaction technologies for people to debate their issues and perspectives (Sari & Margana, 2019).

MALL

Kumar, Wotto, and Bélanger (2018) describe MALL as a successful technique for engaging students on their own terms. Klimova (2019) also mentioned that studying on cellphones improves university students' performance and can be used to enhance other means of course delivery. Hosseini, Ezzadeen, and Alhazmi (2015) identify further advantages of mobile learning, such as increased knowledge of material substance, cost effectiveness, game-based learning, and informal education. Students see mobile learning as a hard and motivating activity (Novawan, Aisyiyah, Wijayanti, Miqawati, & Indrastana, 2019).

Tandem

Tandem is a language exchange application that was created in the 1970s with the idea of learning through language exchange. Tandem learning is founded on the assumption that a language can be learnt by mutual language exchange between tandem partners (ideally, one partner is a native speaker of the language that the other wants to learn).

The program is a community-based platform that enables users to practice their preferred languages one-on-one using texts, audio recordings, voice talks, or video chat. The app is available for the iOS and Android operating systems are available through the App Store and Google Play, respectively. After installing the program, users must sign in, log into their accounts, and provide personal information and hobbies. Later, there would be an approval

procedure in which staff members would monitor the users' requests to assure that they were only joining the Tandem group for the purpose of language study (Nushi & Khazaei, 2020).

Perception

According to Mangal (2010, p. 106), an individual's perception is influenced by four determinant elements: physical and social surroundings, physical structure, life requirements and aspirations, and prior experiences. *"Perception is a highly customized psychological process that assists an organism in organizing and understanding complicated patterns of sensory stimulation to provide the essential meaning to begin his behavioral response."* Perception is described as the ability to see, comprehend, and then interpret stimuli in order to generate interpretation. Aside from that, perception is a recurring experience that develops into a habit. As a result, student who have positive impressions of objects will behave positively toward those objects (Hafrizal; Kasim, Usman; Abdul Samad, 2021).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative method. By using purposive sampling to get participantss. The participants in this research were five students in the eighth semester majoring in English Education at the State Islamic University of North Sumatera. Researcher collected data through questionnaires, interview, and documentation. The researcher uses a questionnaire in the form of a Google form to get participants based on the criteria the researcher wants. Researcher gave questionnaires to eighth-semester students. The questionnaire employed in this study is a closed questionnaire, which means that the responder just needs to mark one of the correct answers. Researcher employed interview approaches to collect detailed and accurate information from respondents. The researcher's prepared questions will be asked in depth during interviews with the respondents. The documentation technique utilized aims to complete the data results collected from earlier interview procedures. Documentation was carried out in this study by archiving numerous activities in the research, including the research process and outcomes, by capturing photographs and audio recordings during interviews.

According to (B. Miles and Huberman, 2014), in the qualitative data analysis process, the data that emerges is in the form of a series of words, not a series of numbers. Data is collected through various means such as observation, interviews, document digests, and recording tapes. After the data is collected, qualitative data analysis will continue to use words to describe and explain the data results. Qualitative analysis has three strands, namely, data reduction

presentation analysis, traditional presentation, and conclusion drawing. In this research, researcher used descriptive analysis techniques. The conducted interviews with the interviewee personally using questions from the writer and recorded their answers using a voice recorder. Then the researcher analyzed the respondents' answers and described them in words. After that, the data obtained was developed and then presented in the form of tables, pictures or discussions.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher described the data resulting from the in- depth interviews that had been conducted. Researcher conducted interviews for five days. Researcher interviewed five English Education students at the Islamic University of North Sumatera. Researcher interviewed students alternately for five days. The researcher asked five questions to each student interviewed. And from interviews that were conducted for five days, information was obtained regarding "Students' Perception on Tandem: Language Exchange Application as a Learning Media to Improve Speaking Skills". The data obtained has similarities and differences from each participant.

1. The Tandem application can be used as a tool to improve speaking skills

Most of participant had similiar idea that Tandem application can be used as a tool to improve their speaking skills. This statement carried out form several of students statement such as;

> (Q1 P4) *"Aplikasi Tandem sangat bagus digunakan untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara kita".* (The Tandem application is very good to use to improve our speaking skills).

The participant thought the Tandem application was a great way to improve speaking skills. This suggests that the participant has a positive perception with the application, possibly because of the features it provided or the outcomes participant obtained after using it.

Other participant also expressed a positive perception by outlining the rationale for utilizing the Tandem application, which is to help people practice speaking several languages, particularly English as she said;

(Q1 P5) *"Saya menggunakan aplikasi Tandem itu untuk membantu saya selain mencari teman juga untuk melatih saya berbicara berbagai bahasa khusunya dalam berbahasa Inggris"*. (I use the Tandeapplication to help me apart from finding friends and also to train me to speak various languages, especially English).

This shows that the participant sees the application as adding value by supporting users in actively practicing speaking, hence improving participant competence in various languages.

Apart from the Tandem application, participants have also used other applications to improve speaking skills but these applications were less effective. As participant said :

(Q2 P1) *"Saya pernah pake aplikasi Doulingo tapi cuman sebentar aja. Karena saya mudah bosan sama yang belajar yang begitu begitulah aja , maksudnya gak dua arah begitulah, kalo aplikasi Tandem itu kan bisa belajar bahasa dua arah ada teman gitu yang diajak misalnya berkomunikasi dan langsung sama penutur aslinya . Saya lebih suka belajar yang begitu"*. (I have used the Doulingo application but only for a short time. Because I easily get bored with those who learn just like that, meaning it's not two-way, that's how, with the Tandem application you can learn languages both ways, with friends like that who you invite, for example, to communicate directly with native speakers. I prefer to learn that way).

Participant's experience with the Duolingo application demonstrates participant desire for a more involved and interesting language learning experience. Participant started with Duolingo, but participant interest waned quickly, and participant switched to the Tandem application instead. In P1's case, switching to the Tandem application represents participant desire for a learning environment that encourages active engagement and meaningful interactions. The opportunity to converse in real time with both language partners and native speakers enriches and authenticates participant educational experience. This individualized and participatory approach not only keeps participant motivated, but also speeds up language competency growth.

Other participant used to learn languages on YouTube before using the Tandem application. The participant studied instructional language learning videos on YouTube in order to improve language skills.   However, the participant later changed participant focus to the Tandem application, indicating participant choice by stating (Q2 P2) *"karena di aplikasi*

Tandem itu bisa langsung belajar atau berinteraksi sama penutur aslinya, jadi lebih enak gitu belajarnya." (because in the Tandem application you can learn directly or interact with native speakers, so learning is better that way.

P2's decision to switch from YouTube to the Tandem application demonstrates the value participant discovered in direct communication with native speakers. Unlike YouTube, where learning is passive and mostly done by watching instructional videos, Tandem provides an interactive environment where P2 can engage in real-time conversations with native speakers.

This active participation enables to practice participant language abilities in authentic circumstances, receive instant feedback, and adapt to the nuances of natural discourse.

Before switching to the Tandem application, the participant largely used Instagram for external communication. However, the participant switched to Tandem because it provided a platform for contact with people from diverse nations. The participant said:

> (Q2 P3) *"Sebelumnya sih saya menggunakan instagram, tapicuman sekedar aja terbilang jarang sih. Terus saya beralih ke aplikasi Tandem karena aplikasi ini memang untuk belajar bahasa gitu kan, jadi saya lebih leluasa dalam berkomunikasi dengan orang luar. Alasannya karena memang aplikasi ini isinya orang - orang dari berbagai negera jadi saya lebih suka memakai aplikasi ini".* (Previously, I used Instagram, but it's just rare. Then I switched to the Tandem application because this application is for learning languages, right, so I have more freedom in communicating with outsiders. The reason is because this application contains people from various countries, so I prefer to use this application).

P3's decision to change from Instagram to Tandem demonstrates participant desire for a more intentional and diverse communication media. While Instagram was a generic communication platform, Tandem's emphasis on language study gave P3 a more suitable atmosphere for communicating with people from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This adjustment enabled P3 to engage in conversations that were suited to the participant language learning objectives, allowing the participant to practice language skills while engaging with individuals all over the world.

One of the participants remark underlined the value of conversation in language learning. As the participant said;

(Q3 P3) *"Karena ini menggunakan komunikasi, tentu saja yang meningkat itu kemampuan berbicara. Karena dengan kita berkomunikasi dengan orang luar, hal itu akan membantu kita dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara, khususnya kemampuan berbicara bahasa Inggris".* (Because this uses communication, of course speaking ability increases. Because when we communicate with outsiders, it will help us improve our speaking skills, especially our ability to speak English).

The participant noticed a substantial improvement in participant's English speaking ability after engaging in interactions with people from various linguistic origins, notably through platforms like Tandem. The participant's explanation emphasizes the need of practical, real-world communication experiences in language learning.

One of the participants emphasizes how conversing directly with native speakers has improved the participant's grammar skills. This suggests that through Tandem conversations, the participant not only improves the participant's speaking skills but also acquires grammar competency through exposure to natural language usage and corrections offered by native speakers.

The participant explains that using the Tandem application has helped the participant to gain confidence in speaking English, the participant statement;

(Q3 P2) *"Yang meningkat pertama pasti speaking, kemudian kedua kemampuan grammar saya juga meningkat karena kan yang namanya berbicara dengan orang native pasti orang itu memperbaiki sendiri kan, kemudian confidence juga meningkat itu aja keknya."*(The first thing that has improved is definitely speaking, then secondly my grammar skills have also improved because speaking with native people means that people will definitely improve themselves, right? Then my confidence also increases, that's all).

P2's confidence in using the language has increased as a result of the interactions with language partners on Tandem. P2 may have felt more assured as a result of good comments from language partners on the participant's English proficiency, as well as opportunity to overcome fears or hesitations while speaking. Furthermore, using the Tandem application may have offered P2 with opportunities to communicate successfully with native speakers, progressively increasing the participant's confidence in the participant's ability to speak

English effectively. P2 believes that utilizing Tandem not only enhances her English language skills, but also strengthens the participant's confidence in conversing in the language.

Other participant stated that using the Tandem application had increased the English vocabulary, hence boosting the proficiency in speaking the language, as the participant said;

> (Q3 P5) *"Pertama dalam vocabulary ya jadi saya lebih banyak mendapatkan berbagai macam kosa kata sehingga membuat saya lebih percaya diri dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris"*. (The first is in vocabulary, so I get more various kinds of vocabulary so that it makes me more confident in speaking English).

P5's engaging experience with language partners on Tandem most likely provided the participant with opportunities to consistently extend and enrich her English vocabulary through daily talks and exposure to varied contexts of word usage. P5 has become more confident and proficient in employing words in English discussions as a result of ongoing practice and expanding comprehension of varied vocabulary. The participant's capacity to express thoughts and ideas in English has grown in tandem with the participant's vocabulary expansion, allowing the participant to speak the language more fluently and proficiently. As a result, P5 underlines that using the Tandem application has allowed the participant to enhance the participant's English vocabulary, which has directly contributed to the participant improved ability to speak English naturally and confidently.

Based on their perceptions, participants see the Tandem application as a viable solution to this goal, given its capacity to provide a platform for practicing speaking with native speakers and interacting in real-life situations. This implies that the application was successful in providing the expected benefits to users for improved speaking ability in specific languages. The participants generally use the Tandem program for language study. However, their study reach extends beyond English and includes a variety of other languages.

The participants used this application to communicate with native speakers and improve their speaking skills in the languages they're learning. In this context, students use Tandem to learn English with the purpose of enhancing their speaking skills with native speakers.

The participants used the Tandem app's features to connect directly with native speakers, gaining a better understanding of the language and its accompanying cultures. Speaking with native speakers allows them to improve their target language skills, increase their vocabulary,

improve their grammar, increase their self- confidence, learn common expressions, and adjust to real accents.

2. Call & video call features are most helpful in improving speaking skills

The features that are widely used and that most help participants in improving their speaking skills in the Tandem application are the call and video call features. One of participants used the telephone feature to improve speaking skills. The participant used the telephone feature to talk to native speakers, the participant said:

> (Q4 P1) *"Kalo saya dengan cara menelpon, jadi saya menggunakan fitur telpon terus saya berbicara sama orang lain gitu".* (If I make a phone call, I use the telephone feature and then I talk to other people).

P1 can practice speaking in the language participant is studying by conversing directly with native speakers using the call feature. So, the call feature helps P1 improve the speaking abilities in the language the participant's studying by allowing the participant to communicate directly with native speakers via the Tandem application.

From the answers of other participants, the participant said that the participant uses the telephone feature to communicate continuously with native speakers, as the participant said (Q4 P3) *"saya menggunakan fitur calling"* (I use the calling feature). One of the participats also used the call feature to improve speaking skills in the Tandem application, as the participant said:

> (Q4 P4) *"Dengan aplikasi Tandem saya menggunakan fitur telpon karena fitur telpon itu bisa memudahkan kita untuk berbicara bertukar komunikasi, jadi speaking skills kita lebih lancar".* (With the Tandem application, I use the telephone feature because the telephone feature can make it easier for us to talk and exchange communications, so our speaking skills are more fluent).

P4 finds the Tandem application's call feature especially useful for improving the speaking abilities. The participant believes that live interactions over the phone provide a unique opportunity to smoothly express thoughts and ideas. Through this participatory discussion, P4's speaking fluency improves significantly. The participant emphasizes how the phone feature streamlines communication, allowing for more fluid and natural talks. In essence, P4 sees the call feature as a helpful feature in the Tandem application that allows the participant to improve

the participant's speaking skills through regular practice and real-time contacts with language partners.

P2 also uses the video call feature to improve the participant's speaking skills, P2 said:

> (Q4 P2) *"Pertama saya pake chat karena saya gak langsung percaya diri, kemudian kalau orang nativenya bersedia untuk telponan atau video call barulah saya menggunakan video call atau telpon tapi saya lebih sering pake video call"*. (First I use chat because I'm not immediately confident, then if the native person is willing to make a phone call or video call, then I use a video call or telephone, but I often use video calls).

As stated by P2, the participant initially chooses text chat because the lacks confidence in speaking openly. However, when native speakers are eager to engage in call or video calls, the participant uses the video call or call feature, preferring video calls. P2 recognizes that video call can help to overcome any uneasiness and gain confidence in interacting directly with native speakers. Thus, the participant sees video call as a useful feature for enhancing speaking skills since allow the participant to practice real-time communication with others who speak the language the participant is studying.

Apart from using the telephone and video call features, the participants also use the voice note feature. One of the participants noted that the Tandem application has various capabilities available, including the telephone, video call, and voice note functionalities. The participant stated that she preferred to use the voice note tool to improve the participant's speaking skills. The participant said;

> (Q4 P5) *"Di dalam aplikasi Tandem ada beberapa fitur, yaitu fitur telepon, fitur video call, dan juga ada fitur voice note. Saya lebih suka menggunakan voice note untuk meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara saya"*. (In the Tandem application there are several features, namely a telephone feature, a video call feature, and also a voice note feature. I prefer to use voice notes to improve my speaking skills).

P5's decision to use the voice note feature to improve speaking skills demonstrates her deliberate approach to language acquisition. Voice notes allow P5 to practice speaking in English without the strain of real-time interaction, allowing the participant to improve the participant's pronunciation, fluency, and articulation at her own speed. The voice note tool allows P5 to record the speech, listen to it later, and discover areas for growth. This self

assessment method enables the participant to identify specific linguistic issues that may require correction, such as word pronunciation or speech flow.

From the results of the interview and explanation above, researcher obtained information that the participants improved their speaking skills in the Tandem application using the telephone, message, video call and voice note features. Telephone and video call features are features that are often used by students to communicate, so that their speaking skills were honed. And they also use the message and voice note features with the same goal, namely to communicate directly with native speakers.

3. **The Tandem application is the most effective application for improving speaking skills**

The Tandem application is the most effective application based on students perception in improving their speaking skills. They think that the Tandem application makes their speaking skills improve. One of the participants stated, (Q5 P2) *"kemampuan berbicara saya menjadi meningkatkan sedikit ke level intermediate"* (my speaking ability has improved slightly to intermediate level). This statement demonstrates significant progress in the participant's English language skills. It confirms that P2 has grown to a higher level of English speaking proficiency as a result of using the Tandem application.

The intermediate level of English is commonly regarded as having sufficient skill to speak in a variety of everyday contexts, albeit with certain limits. P2's fluency, comprehension, and clarity in speaking English may have improved as the participant advanced to this level. The participant might feel more at ease and competent when conversing with native speakers and in different communication circumstances.

P2 has worked hard to improve the participant's speaking skills, and the participant's accomplishment highlights the benefits of utilizing the Tandem application. P2 has demonstrated that with consistency and attention to using Tandem, significant development in English language ability may be made. P3's statement demonstrates a significant improvement in the participant's English speaking skills as a result of her experience with the Tandem application. The participant said:

> (Q5 P3) *"Sebelumya kemampuan berbicara saya dalam bahasa Inggris itu masih rendah, namun ketika saya menggunakan aplikasi Tandem, sesudah saya berkomunikasi dengan penutur aslinya kemampuan berbicara saya meningkat,*

jauh lebih meningkat". (Previously my speaking ability in English was still low, but when I used the Tandem application, after I communicated with native speakers my speaking ability improved, much more).

This story highlights Tandem's dramatic impact on the participant's language proficiency. P3's progression from a low skill level to a much enhanced one demonstrates the value of interacting with native speakers via the application. P3's English speaking skills improved as the participant actively participated in conversations and received real-time feedback from native speakers. Similarly, P4's experience supports P3's claim that utilizing Tandem improves language skills, as the participant said (Q5 P4) *"dengan menggunakan aplikasi Tandem speaking skills saya jadi lebih meningkat. Jadi sangat disarankan untuk menggunakan aplikasi tersebut"* (by using the Tandem application my speaking skills have improved even more. So it is highly recommended to use this application). P4 noticed that after using the Tandem application, P4's speaking proficiency improved.

P3 and P4's experiences demonstrate Tandem's efficacy as a platform for language acquisition and improvement. Users like P3 and P4 have been able to overcome language difficulties, gain confidence, and greatly improve their English speaking skills by engaging in meaningful discussions with native speakers. Their experiences demonstrate how technology-enabled language exchange platforms can foster transformative learning experiences and empower people to attain their language learning objectives.

The researcher concluded from the explanation above that participant's speaking abilities after using the Tandem application improved to an intermediate level. By using the Tandem application the participant gain more vocabulary and improve their pronunciation in English. And their confidence also increases in speaking English after the participants use the Tandem application to improve their speaking skills.

From the explanation above, the Tandem application has a positive effect on improving students' speaking skills. Because in the Tandem application, the participants interact and communicate directly with native speakers. In conclusion, the Tandem application stands out as an effective tool for developing language learners' speaking skills, providing a dynamic and engaging platform for direct interaction with native speakers and facilitating considerable advances in language proficiency.

Researcher conducted this research to find out how students' perception on Tandem: language exchange application as a learning media to improve speaking skills. From the results of this research, answers have been obtained to questions asked to students from the English Education Department, Islamic University of North Sumatera, one sixth semester students and four eighth semester students. The answer obtained was positive, the Tandem application helped students improve their speaking skills. Students feel that the Tandem application is very good for use as a language learning media, especially English. Based on students perception, the Tandem application is a media for learning languages by directly interacting with native speakers.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of Tandem, a language exchange program, as a tool for enhancing speaking skills. The study included five English Education students from the Islamic University of North Sumatera. Students had a generally positive attitude toward the Tandem application. Students found it really advantageous to improve their speaking skills through direct engagement with native speakers. The application was praised as a useful tool for language acquisition, particularly for practicing English. The primary motive for utilizing the Tandem program was to study and practice languages, particularly English. Students liked the opportunity to interact with native speakers, which they felt greatly aided their language learning process.

Students used the Tandem application's telephone, message, video call, and voice note functionalities. The most popular feature were the telephone and video call, which allowed students to practice real-time conversational skills. After utilizing the Tandem application, students reported improvements in their speaking abilities, with the majority progressing to an intermediate level. This development was accompanied by an increased confidence in speaking English, better grammar, greater vocabulary, and improved pronunciation. The aspects that students improve most when using the Tandem application are vocabulary and grammar.

To summarize, the Tandem application is an effective tool for improving speaking skills, offering valuable opportunities for direct connection with native speakers. Students can significantly enhance their language competence by regularly using the application and obtaining appropriate instruction and support.

REFERENCES

Appel, C., & Pujolà, J. T. (2021). Designing speaking interaction in LMOOCs: An eTandem approach. *ReCALL*, *33*(2), 161–176. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344021000045

Baron, R. (2020). Students' Perception on Online Application in Speaking Skill. *VELES Voices of English Language Education Society*, *4*(2), 213–221. https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v4i2.2543

Daulay, S. H., Lubis, Y., Damanik, E. S. D., Wandini, R. R., & Putri, F. A. (2021). Does Pictionary Game Effective for Students' Speaking Skill? *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, *6*(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v6i1.486

Dwi Utami, N. R. W. (2015). *An Analysis on Students' Effort to Improve Speaking Skill*. *4*(3), 1–10.

Flick, Uwe;Von Kardorff, Ernest;Steinke, I. (2004). *A Compain to Qualitative Research*.

https://doi.org/https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=F6O-Ru4Ag1IC&oi=fnd&pg=PA146&dq=Research+qualitative+design&ots=mn D-2qw6Ul&sig=VgdA-_m4WTn8ZMLxo1WdojoIrGk

Hafrizal; Kasim, Usman; Abdul Samad, I. (2021). Students' Perception Toward English Subject and Their Learning Outcome. *English Education Journal*, *12*(3), 477–459. https://doi.org/ 10.24815/eej.v12i3.19251

Jumiaty, A. A., & Kuswoyo, H. (2023). Undergraduate Students'Perceptions Towards Lecturer'S Classroom Management in the Indonesian Tertiary Context. *Linguistics and Literature Journal*, *4*(1), 89–99. http://jim.teknokrat.ac.id/index.php/linguistics_and_literature/article/view/3252%0Ahttp://jim.teknokrat.ac.id/index.php/linguistics_and_literature/article/ download/3252/841

Komala, R. D., & Nellyaningsih. (2017). Tinjauan Implementasi Personal Selling Pada Pt. Astra Internasional Daihatsu Astra Biz Center Bandung Pada Tahun 2017. *Jurnal Fakultas Ilmu Terapan Universitas Telkom*, *3*(2), 330–337.

L, J. M. (2022). Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. In Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif. In *Rake Sarasin* (Issue Maret). https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=O-B3eJYAAAAJ&hl=en

Lenaini, I. (2021). Teknik Pengambilan Sampel Purposive Dan Snowball Sampling. *HISTORIS: Jurnal Kajian, Penelitian & Pengembangan Pendidikan Sejarah*, *6*(1), 33–39. http://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/historis

Miqawati, A. H. (2020). Pronunciation Learning, Participation, and Attitude Enhancement Through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (Mall). *English Review: Journal of English Education*, *8*(2), 47. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v8i2.2118

Naciri, H. (2019). *The Use of ICTs to Enhance Students ' Speaking Skills*. Nguyen, T. D. T., & Pham, V. P. H. (2022). Effects of Using Technology to Support Students in Developing

Speaking Skills. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, *1*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.22111

Nushi, M., & Khazaei, V. (2020). Tandem Language Exchange: An App to Improve Speaking Skill. *Journal of Foreign Language Education and Technology*, *5*(2), 2020. http://jflet.com/jflet/

Rahman Hz, B. I., & Ramadhan, A. (2022). Does Educational Background Influence Students' Public Speaking Skill? Reality Vs Students' Perspective. *Wacana: Jurnal Penelitian Bahasa, Sastra Dan Pengajaran*, *20*(1), 17–25. https://doi.org/10.33369/jwacana.v20i1.20549

Rajendran, T., & Md Yunus, M. (2021). A Systematic Literature Review on the use of Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL) for Enhancing Speaking Skills among ESL and EFL Learners. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *10*(1), 586–609. https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarped/v10-i1/8939

Rutledge, P. B., & Hogg, J. L. C. (2020). In-Depth Interviews. *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*, *April*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071.iemp0019

Sari, Y. N., & Margana, M. (2019). YouTube as a Learning Media to Improve the Student's Speaking Ability in 21st Century. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Linguistics*, *4*(2), 263. https://doi.org/10.21462/jeltl.v4i2.296

Tiara, S. A. (2020). *Exchange Application To Develop Students ' Speaking Skill*.

Zhou, A. (2023). Investigating the impact of online language exchanges on second language speaking and willingness to communicate of Chinese EFL learners: a mixed methods study. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *14*(May), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1177922

Zulaiha, D., & Triana, Y. (2023). Students' Perception toward the Use of Open Educational Resources to Improve Writing Skills. *Studies in English Language and Education*, *10*(1), 176–196. https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v10i1.25797