

Speech Pro Apps: An Innovative Approach in Enhancing Tertiary Students' Presentation

Yong Hua Ying^{1,2}, Katherine Livan Kehing^{1,2}, Mohamad Sobri Suhaili^{1,2}, Melor Md Yunus²

¹General Studies Department, Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak, Malaysia

²Faculty of Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Malaysia

Email: klkehing@gmail.com

How to cite this paper: Ying, Y. H., Kehing, K. L., Suhaili, M. S., & Md Yunus, M. (2022). Speech Pro Apps: An Innovative Approach in Enhancing Tertiary Students' Presentation. *Creative Education*, 13, 1327-1336.

<https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2022.134080>

Received: February 16, 2022

Accepted: April 16, 2022

Published: April 19, 2022

Copyright © 2022 by author(s) and Scientific Research Publishing Inc. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY 4.0).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

In the present study, the results of an investigation of the use of Speech Pro in Communicative English classroom explored among ten learners to see whether using a mobile application affects the improvement of learners' oral presentation skills. The research respondents consisted of 10 Diploma students who enrolled in Communicative English course in a Polytechnic in Sarawak, Malaysia. This research uses three research instruments mainly, pre-test and post-test together with an Oral Presentation Rubric for the course. Based on the findings, the use of this application has helped learners to reduce their anxiety and increase their confidence and motivation levels as well as helped them to formulate a better-structured presentation. Students found the application helpful and can be applied in other subjects as well.

Keywords

Speech Pro, Presentation Skills, Tertiary Education, Language Application

1. Introduction

Development in technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT) and transparency in its usage are two significant phenomena that are expected to be the key characteristics and have implications for changing the learning paradigm of the 21st century. In a study carried out by Farisi (2016), the author implied that no organization today would produce results without implementing technology into every element of its day-to-day activities. It is time for schools to optimize technology's influence as well. As the use of mobile technology for language teaching and learning is increasingly growing, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) offers easy accessibility without the limitations of both location and time for any learner. Devices such as smartphones,

iPod, tablet, laptop and iPad are introduced in Mobile Learning to scaffold language learning (Sung et al., 2016). For those learning English as a second language, various applications are built and used. With the portability and usability of mobile devices, learning materials can be accessed effortlessly.

The emergence of the Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint (2015-2025) highlights the overarching ambition of the ministry to establish a higher education system that is among the leading education systems in the world and that helps Malaysia to succeed in the global economy. The newly launched Malaysia Higher Education Blueprint is focused on the accomplishments of the system to date and recommends fundamental improvements in the way that the ministry and system will work to achieve this aim. In particular, the ministry seeks to concentrate on the results over the inputs and to aggressively pursue technologies and innovations that address the needs of students and allow the learning experience to be more personalized (Ganapathy, 2016). The establishment of ICT in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) also requires students to have a clear understanding of the English language to allow them to efficiently do their research and tasks.

English is often referred to as the language of creation and growth. It has become one of the international languages that are commonly used in the world. The aspiration of the government to create Malaysia as a center for education excellence can only materialize if the English language in public and private HEIs is widely used in teaching, learning, communication, Research, and Development (Grapragasem et al., 2014).

In this digital and global age, the call for strong oral communication skills is deafening. In most tertiary institutions, oral presentation in language learning is habitual. Since oral presentation is frequently used to assess student's performance in the classroom, poorly performed presentation give rise to poor classroom results. Moreover, oral presentation skills are recognized as a central professional skill, but most students have hardly mastered the skills. They faced difficulties in structuring their presentation which causes poor organization of ideas, and often leads to a poor presentation. In addition, graduate unemployment in Malaysia has been attributable to poor graduate communication skills. One problem that has become a major concern in many institutions of tertiary education in Malaysia is the large number of students who graduated with excellent results but remained unemployed. According to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar, 161,000 out of 400,000 graduates, aged between 20 - 24 years were unemployed (Bernama, 2015). The key concern identified from prospective employers is the lack of communication skills for local graduates, particularly to communicate in English. In addition, anxiety and fear of making mistakes prevent them from making efforts to speak English (Gee et al., 2015). Therefore, language teachers in tertiary institutions are forced to assist students in gaining these skills, which would be necessary if they enter the workforce in the future (Murugaiah, 2016). Consequently, the aim of this study is to scrutinize the effectiveness of the Speech Pro Application to help learners to reduce their anxiety and increase their confidence and motiva-

tion levels as well as helping them to formulate a better-structured presentation.

2. Literature Review

Today, smartphones are one of the most ubiquitous instruments in existence, and there is no doubt that urban living is now a requirement for this technological wonder. Not surprisingly, because of its inexpensive, common and realistic features, educators have considered using mobile devices such as smartphones in education (Malek et al., 2018). A lot of research has also been done to evaluate the readiness of students to integrate mobile devices with learning (Hussin et al., 2012; Hamat et al., 2012). It is known from the research that there is a desire to use smartphones in the teaching and learning process. Recently, many researchers also focus on the study of mobile learning as the learning process has been made simpler by the wide distribution of computers and communication technologies. Alqahtani & Mohammad (2015) indicated that mobile application are increasing in popularity rapidly and can be used for different purposes extensively in education. The Google PlayStore browsing pages such as Android Application display the selection of learning applications for subjects such as different languages, mathematics-related concepts, or programming languages. The effectiveness of mobile learning in education also proved by a research done by Sung et al. (2016) on the effects of mobile-integrated education. Shahbaz & Khan (2017) research also showed that participants performed better in their post test scores after using mobile learning during their teaching and learning process. Educators should concentrate on enhancing students' soft skills and critical thinking abilities to allow the students to become better communicators and help them to interact effectively in international settings (Yunus, 2018). This can help students in developing their critical thinking skills that will assist them in studying other subjects and life skills, not just in their English learning. Thus, Speech Pro App is developed to help students in managing their oral presentation. Students are able to construct a better script when preparing for their presentation with the help of the application. Besides that, it also acts as useful notes for students to use in various situations and does not only apply for English subject but also in other subjects as well.

2.1. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The concept of Speech Pro is based on a social constructivist perspective, loosely on the ideas of Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The theories of social constructivism have centred on the role of scaffolds given by both human and non-human agents that enable more able or experienced learners or teachers to promote and assist learners in acquiring their own skills (Bouchaib, 2016). Jerome S. Bruner likes Vygotsky's proposed scaffolding as means of fading support as the learners became more expert and autonomous. Scaffolding refers to the steps taken to reduce degrees of freedom in carrying out some tasks so that the child can concentrate on the difficult skill in the process of acquiring (McLeod,

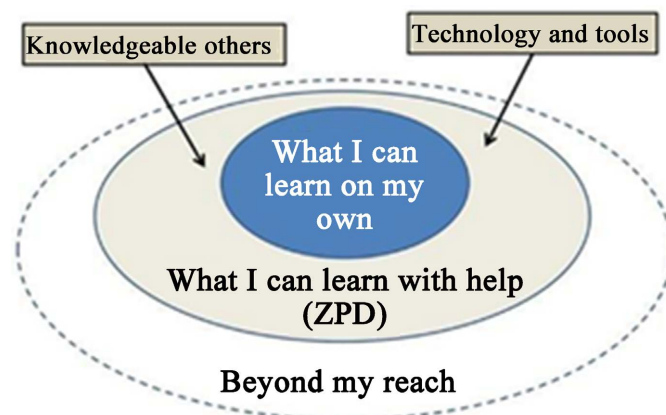
2019). Typically, the concept was indicative of human help when first expounded. Now, the definition can be expanded with the advent of new technology and intelligent applications for agents (Silalahi, 2019). These are common concepts of education for most people, which essentially require helping learners to attain a degree of skill or expertise that goes beyond what they might otherwise do on their own. Speech Pro was designed for the purpose of simplifying the task of oral presentation for students; motivating and encouraging students to study by using technologies; highlighting some important task elements and errors, and also giving models for them to imitate in order to complete their oral presentation task.

With today's technologies, students can reach to various information online but somehow there was no immediate signpost or recognizable help to guide them in the online environment to press onwards. Speech Pro Application is a digital media created to ensure students are within their ZPD and scaffold their learning so they can maintain their progress in their course.

Figure 1 shows the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's Zone of proximal development (ZPD). Based on students' background knowledge on oral presentation skills, they can do their oral presentation, but they can not achieve their best performance. According to the Constructivism Theory, students' performance can be increased at the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) with the aid of knowledgeable others (teachers, parents, and peers) or technology and tools (Speech Pro Apps). In the Speech Pro Application, there are phrases to guide students in doing the oral presentation and with the help of knowledgeable others, they will understand the content of the Speech Pro Application better. By imitating the phrases provided in the application and also the comment of teachers, students will be able to learn. After students had mastered the entire skills, they are able to come out with a perfect presentation on their own.

2.2. Speech Pro Application

The "Thunkable" application builder was used to develop the Speech Pro Application. Speech Pro contains notes on presentation structures which can be



Note: Taken from Wheeler (2015) University of Plymouth.

Figure 1. Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD).

accessed easily according to different sections such as “Introduction”, “Effective Openings”, “Content Structure”, “Describing Visuals”, “Conclusion” and “Handling Q & A”. It is suitable for all types of presentation. Speech Pro also includes a tutorial video in guiding users to utilize the application. According to [Miangah & Nezarat \(2012\)](#), a successful m-learning should consist of voice transmission facilities for speech. In order to satisfy their learning needs, learners can learn the proper pronunciation of uncommon or new words through such facilities. Therefore, the application comes with another special feature, which is the pronunciation checker. Users can use it to check for accurate pronunciation of a word. Internet connection is not required while using the application as it provides instant access ([Figure 2](#)).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research uses quantitative methods. A Pre-test and Post-test were used to test the effectiveness of this innovation.

3.2. Research Respondents

A total of ten (10) Semester 4 students from a polytechnic in Sarawak who

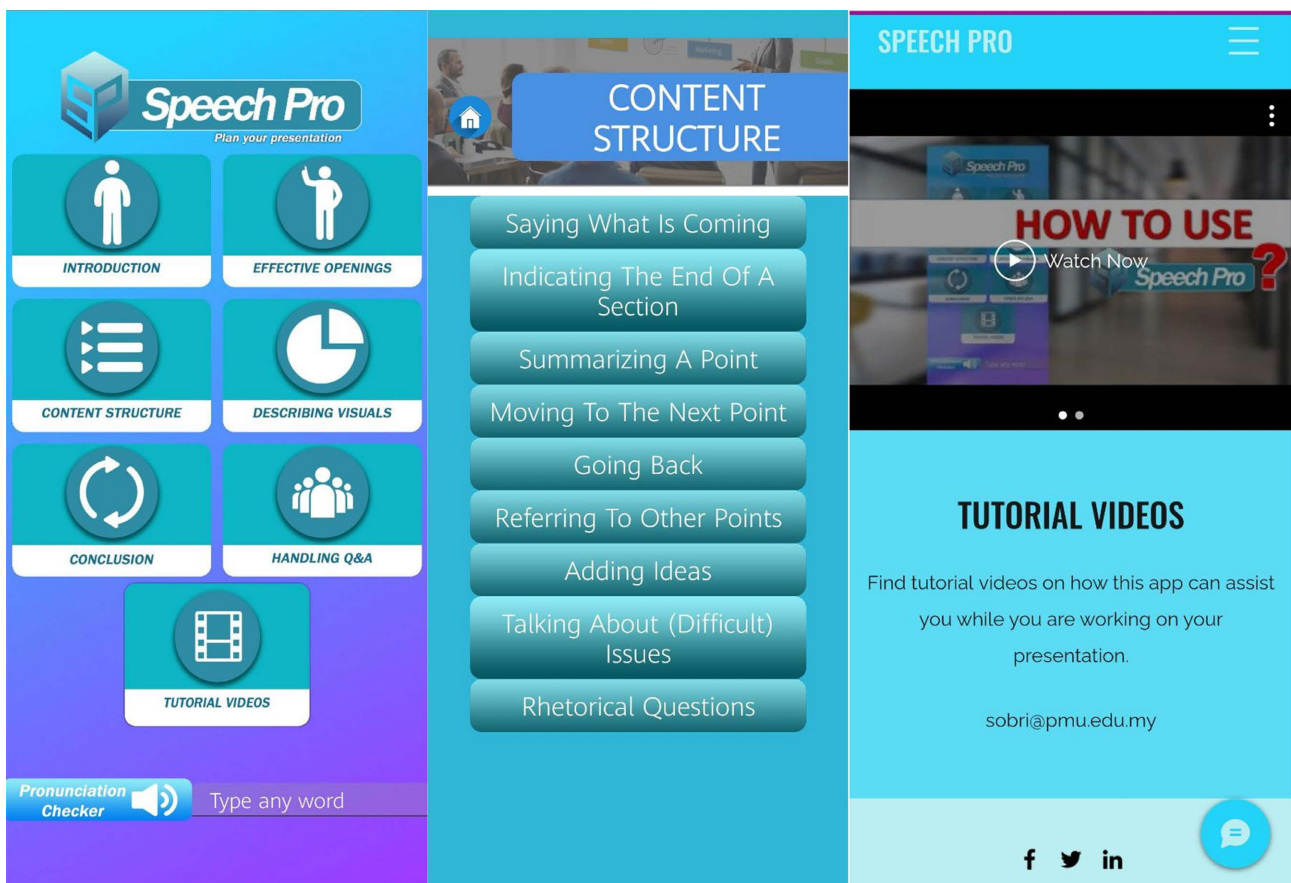


Figure 2. Speech pro mobile application interface.

enrolled for Communicative English course were selected to test the effectiveness of the innovation. The level of students' proficiency in their oral presentation was based on their performance for the mini project presentation practice in the class.

3.3. Research Instrument

This research used three research instruments mainly, pre-test, post-test and an oral presentation rubric for Communicative English course. The students had to present their Mini Project by using graphs and charts. A presentation rubric was used to assess them.

3.4. Research Procedure

A pilot test was carried out to see how Speech Pro helps in preparing students' presentation. Before implementing the Speech Pro Application, a pre-test (Mini Project Presentation) was conducted. The students were given three days to practice the presentation before the pre-test was carried out. The marks for the pre-test were collected. After that, the lecturer introduced the Speech Pro Application to the students. The students need to download the application from Google Play Store. By using Speech Pro with the guide of a lecturer, students come out with the scripts for their presentation. They were given sufficient time to practice their presentation and after three days, they were assessed which served as the post-test (Mini Project Presentation) to identify if there were any improvements in their oral presentation.

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

In this research, a pre-test, post-test and an oral presentation rubric for Communicative English course were used as the research instruments. All of the students' scores for the pre-test were compared to the scores for the post-test. The percentage score formula was used to analyse the scores and was placed according to the grade system.

4. Finding and Analysis

Figure 3 shows the scores obtained by the students which clearly shows improvement after using Speech Pro. Based on the data collected, students' scores improve at an average of 33.5%. All 10 students scored 65 marks and above for the post-test compared to the pre-test with the highest at 53 marks. The results from the pre-test and post-test clearly show the effectiveness of Speech Pro Application in enhancing students' oral presentation skills especially in reducing their anxiety and increasing their confidence and motivation levels as well as helping them to formulate a better structured presentation by using the correct phrases and sentence structures to do their presentation. Other than that, students' pronunciation also shows great improvement after they use the Pronunciation Checker to check for the accurate pronunciation. **Table 1** and **Table 2**

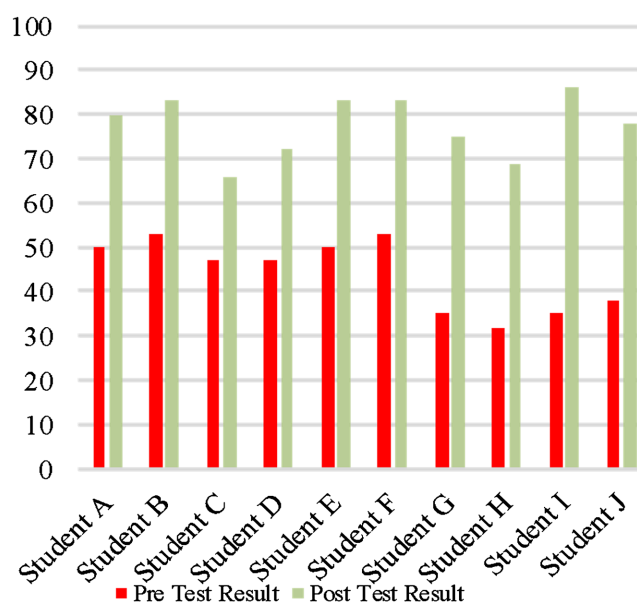


Figure 3. Students' scores before and after using speech pro.

Table 1. Pre-test (Transcripts).

The graph shows the statistic of drunk driving victims in Malaysia from 2014 to 2018. Firstly, let me explain about the different colours have been used to indicate the victims of the drunk driving in Malaysia. As you can see the Blue colour is represented for death and orange colour is for Injury victim. As can be seen the blue colour is for the death victims, it's started from 193 person in 2014. It then gained slowly to 229 in 2015 and climbed a little to 237 in 2016. There was a very drastic slide in 2017 to 58 and decreased at the final year to 54 persons. The orange colour is statistic of drunk victim injury. It's started from 140 in 2014. Then, it is climbed to 191 in 2015 and gained to 224 persons in 2016. But, as you can see it drop to 154 person and it decrease moderately in the next year to 137 person.

Table 2. Post-test (Transcripts).

Good morning to Madam XXX as our Communicative English lecturer. (Greeting) My name is XXX from XXX, (Introducing himself) what I like to present today is The Statistic of Drunk Driving Victims in Malaysia from 2014 until 2018. (Introducing title) The objective of this presentation is to find the Statistic of Drunk Driving Victims in Malaysia from 2014 until 2018. (Introducing the objective) The graph shows the statistic of drunk driving victims in Malaysia from 2014 until 2018. Firstly, (Sequence Connector) let me explain about the different line graph colour that I used. The blue colour represented for death and orange colour is for injury victims. As can be seen the blue colour is for the death victims, it started from 193 person in 2014. It then increased slightly to 229 in 2015 and climbed a little to 237 in 2016. There was a very massive fall in 2017 to 58 and decreased slowly at the final year to 54 persons. Lastly, (Sequence Connector) the orange colour is for injury victims. It started from 140 in 2014. Then, it climbed steadily to 191 in 2015 and gained slowly to 224 persons in 2016. After that, it is declined rapidly to 154 person, and it decrease gradually in the next year to 137 persons. Well, this brings me to the end of my presentation, (conclusion) I would like to conclude that drinking alcohol while driving is not right. It is not worth the consequences, and it is not fair for a drunk driver to risk the lives of innocent people.

shows one of the transcripts by one of the students in doing the oral presentation.

Both the transcripts show differences before and after using Speech Pro Application. After using the application, students can start their presentation with greetings and a self-introduction. Moreover, the title is clearly mentioned followed by the objective of the mini project. While presenting the contents, the student used sequence connectors to organize the points and some signposting to guide the audience towards the presentation. A conclusion was also included in the presentation compared to the pre-test, where the student just ended the presentation after the points were presented. Obviously, Speech Pro Application helps students a lot in structuring their presentation and assist them in getting good scores in their presentation.

5. Discussion

Cook (2015) indicated that in terms of creating and learning the world's experience, interactions and observations, students from generations Y and Z are active learners. They desire regular and technology-enhanced learning opportunities and seek educational opportunities using visually improved teaching methods. Smart devices have become part of our everyday life such as smartphones, iPads, iPods, and laptops. Self-regulated learning can be generated by transforming the use of these devices for language learning. Students choose what they are going to learn, how they are going to learn, and decide for themselves how their own learning will be measured (Gangaiamaran & Pasupathi, 2017). With the rapid growth of English learning applications and the popularization of mobile devices among college students, students have become more and more interested in the learning advantages that mobile applications offer especially tertiary level learners. For college students who have easy access to these tools and materials, there are a number of applications that apply to learning English. However, the fact is that it is like a jungle in the application industry. There is too many software available for the option and use of college students. Therefore, Speech Pro Application is designed to overcome the problem whereby it could assist college students in preparing for their oral presentation. Once it is downloaded from the Google Play Store, it will stay in the smart devices. Moreover, the Speech Pro application emphasizes self-regulated learning so students can decide when and where to learn. Another advantage of the Speech Pro application is it is an off-line mobile application. Since many students come from the underdeveloped villages and are economically poor, they cannot afford or implement online resources effectively. This off-line application can help to uplift the students' learning. Hence, students' anxiety towards oral presentation can be reduced and their confidence and motivation levels will be increased when preparing for a presentation.

According to Liu & He (2014), Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) will not only boost the English ability of students, but also increase students' desire to learn by themselves. Zou & Li (2015) indicated that a suitable app with the tech-

nological revolution in terms of creativity in the field of education should be created to assist college students in enhancing their learning in English. Their study proved that the applications inspired the students and showed the students' positive attitude towards using mobile devices for learning at the same time.

6. Conclusion

This innovative approach acts as useful notes for students to use in various situations. Students can construct better presentation scripts as well as improve students' motivation and ability to do their presentation confidently and effectively in English. Feedbacks from students show that this approach significantly increases their motivation in doing their presentation in English. The students not only display reduced anxiety in English speaking but also became more confident in speaking in English. Another feedback worthy to mention is that the students enjoyed the new approach in learning oral presentation skills. The Speech Pro Application eases students in doing their preparation for their oral presentation and this indirectly increases their confidence and motivational level. This approach has proven to be helpful to the students to learn at their own pace while the instructor acts more like a facilitator and provides guidance whenever necessary. Future research can involve more participants to guarantee the representativeness of results. Furthermore, limitations of Communicative English students dealing with the Speech Pro Application can also be explored. This might alert the institution to the difficulties that students face and assist them in overcoming them. Consequently, a mobile application can be an effective educational tool that can be used as an alternative learning platform for anyone, especially those who prefer self-paced learning.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

References

- Alqahtani, M., & Mohammad, H. (2015). Mobile Applications' Impact on Students' Performance and Satisfaction. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *14*, 102-112.
- Bernama (2015). *Graduates among 400,000 Currently Unemployed in Malaysia, Says Minister*.
<http://www.theinsiderarchived.com/malaysia/article/graduates-among-400000-currently-unemployed-in-malaysia-says-minister>
- Bouchaib, B. (2016). Review of Vygotsky's Socio-Constructivist Theory. *Research Journal of English Language and Literature*, *4*, 841-852.
- Cook, V. S. (2015). *Engaging Generation Z Students*. The University of Illinois Springfield Center for Online Learning.
https://sites.google.com/a/uis.edu/colrs_cook/home/engaging-generation-z-students
- Farisi, M. I. (2016). Developing the 21st-Century Social Studies Skills through Technology Integration. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, *17*, 16-30.
<https://doi.org/10.17718/tojde.47374>

- Ganapathy, M. (2016). Transformation of Malaysia's Higher Education System: Malaysia Blueprint (2015-2025). *Bulletin of Higher Education Research*, January 2016, 10-11.
- Gangaiamaran, R., & Pasupathi, M. (2017). Review on Use of Mobile Apps for Language Learning. *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research*, 12, 11242-11251.
- Gee, M. W. K., Abdullah, N. S. A., & Leong, L. M. (2015). Oral Presentation Difficulties-Experience of Students at a Polytechnic in Sarawak. *Issues in Language Studies*, 4, 28-40. <https://doi.org/10.33736/ils.1653.2015>
- Grapragasem, S., Krishnan, A., & Mansor, A. N. (2014). Current Trends in Malaysian Higher Education and the Effect on Education Policy and Practice: An Overview. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 3, 85-93. <https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v3n1p85>
- Hamat, A., Embi, M. A., & Hassan, H. A. (2012). Mobile Learning Readiness among UKM Lecturers. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 59, 406-410. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.294>
- Hussin, S., Manap, M. R., Amir, Z., & Krish, P. (2012). Mobile Learning Readiness among Malaysian Students at Higher Learning Institutes. *Asian Social Science*, 8, 276-283. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v8n12p276>
- Liu, Q., & He, X. (2014). *Using Mobile Apps to Facilitate English Learning for College Students in China*. Bachelor's Thesis, University of Boras. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:896787/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Malek, N. A. A., Hassan, N. S. I. C., & Nor, N. H. M. (2018). Smartphone Use for Language Receptive Skills: A Guided Approach. *Journal of Creative Practices in Language Learning and Teaching (CPLT)*, 6, 72-81.
- McLeod, S. A. (2019, July 11). *Bruner-Learning Theory in Education*. Simply Psychology. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bruner.html>
- Miangah, T. M., & Nezarat, A. (2012). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning. *International Journal of Distributed and Parallel Systems (IJDPS)*, 3, 309-318. <https://doi.org/10.5121/ijdps.2012.3126>
- Murugaiah, P. (2016). Pecha Kucha Style PowerPoint Presentation: An Innovative Call Approach to Developing Oral Presentation Skills of Tertiary Students. *Teaching English with Technology* 16, 88-104.
- Shahbaz, M., & Khan, R. M. I. (2017). Use of Mobile Immersion in Foreign Language Teaching to Enhance Target Language Vocabulary Learning. *MIER Journal of Educational Studies, Trends and Practices*, 7, 66-82.
- Silalahi, R. M. (2019). Understanding Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development for Learning. *POLYGLOT: Jurnal Ilmiah*, 15, 169-186. <https://doi.org/10.19166/pji.v15i2.1544>
- Sung, Y. T., Chang, K. E., & Liu, T. C. (2016). The Effects of Integrating Mobile Devices with Teaching and Learning on Students' Learning Performance: A Meta-Analysis and Research Synthesis. *Computers & Education*, 94, 252-275.
- Wheeler, S. (2015). *Collaborative Learning and Online Communities [PowerPoint Slides]*. <https://opennetworkedlearning.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/onl151-steve-wheeler.pdf>
- Yunus, M. M. (2018). Innovation in Education and Language Learning in 21st Century. *Journal of Sustainable Development Education and Research*, 2, 33-34. <https://doi.org/10.17509/jsder.v2i1.12355>
- Zou, B., & Li, J. Y. (2015). Exploring Mobile Apps for English Language Teaching and Learning. In *Proceedings of the 2015 EUROCALL Conference* (pp. 564-568). Critical CALL. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED564170> <https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2015.000394>