

## **Analysis of Students' Perception Toward the Use of the *Fondi* Application to Learn Speaking English in Junior High School**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to determine students' perceptions of using the *FONDI* application for speaking practice and the research uses the *Fondi* application because this application is still rarely used for classroom learning. The design of this research was descriptive qualitative. Data collection using interviews with students of Junior High School in Banyuwangi. Five students who had been using the *FONDI* application for around two months were interviewed, such that while using the *FONDI* program for speaking practice, these students may describe their perceptions, improving the quality and fluidity of their speaking. After conducting interviews, the results showed that students gave positive perceptions, such as, the students feeling happy, enthusiastic, and increasingly eager to use the *Fondi* application to improve their speaking skills. But students also gave negative perceptions, such as, that *Fondi* should be subscribed at a cost that is quite expensive and should be supported by the internet.

**Keywords:** Perception; Speaking; *FONDI* Application

**Abstrak:** Studi ini bertujuan untuk menentukan persepsi siswa terhadap penggunaan aplikasi *FONDI* untuk latihan berbicara. Penelitian ini menggunakan aplikasi *Fondi* karena aplikasi ini masih jarang digunakan untuk pembelajaran di kelas. Desain dari penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Pengumpulan data menggunakan wawancara dengan siswa Sekolah Menengah Pertama di Banyuwangi. Lima siswa yang telah menggunakan aplikasi *FONDI* selama sekitar dua bulan diwawancarai, sehingga saat menggunakan program *FONDI* untuk latihan berbicara, siswa-siswa ini dapat menggambarkan persepsinya, meningkatkan kualitas dan kelancaran berbicara mereka. Setelah melakukan wawancara, hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa siswa memberikan persepsi positif, seperti siswa merasa senang, antusias, dan semakin bersemangat untuk menggunakan aplikasi *Fondi* untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara mereka. Namun, siswa juga memberikan persepsi negatif, seperti bahwa *Fondi* harus berlangganan dengan biaya yang cukup mahal dan harus didukung oleh internet.

**Kata kunci:** Persepsi; Berbicara; Aplikasi *FONDI*.

### **INTRODUCTION**

As we know, Indonesia is still experiencing challenges in terms of English Education. Speaking has become quite difficult to implement in Indonesia as a country that uses ESL (English as a second language) or EFL (English as a foreign language). (Islam (2021) argues that speaking is the most important of the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in the context of ESL (English as a second language).

Then why is speaking still difficult to implement in Indonesia? The answer is that Erling et al (2023) contend that schools still focus on providing language theory without practicing it. So learning a language is not enough to just learn the theory but must be practiced so that language becomes a good communication tool. English is the only language that is practically universally

utilized in every industry, including commerce, engineering, tourism, science, information technology, and medicine (Mehrajuddin, 2022).

Hamka (2022) argues that creating English as an accessible language is essential to make learning English interesting and enjoyable, and also makes it easier to solve problems by searching for information that is sometimes in English. Technology has been introduced to support the learning process in the classroom since the 21st century and technology has become an important part of the language learning process (Slimane, 2019). ICT (Information and Communication Technology), which is now increasingly commonly used in the learning process, can be one of the options to make learning English easy and fun, but still with good results. Several studies were conducted in this area. Octavianita (2022) stated that technology can make it easier for teachers to deliver material and for students to learn it. The introduction of technology can increase efficiency in the teaching and learning process. (Rinanda,2021) also argues that the use of Learn English Conversation application can make it easier to practice speaking and present fun learning during the learning process. Similarly, Kusmaryani et al (2019) found that students are very interested in the explore and practicing mobile learning applications and both teachers and students can improve their English speaking skills.

The previous studied mostly focus on studying the use of commonly used applications, such as Youtube, Whatsapp, ELSA Speaks, Duolingo, etc. The results of research on ELT using the ELSA Speaks application explained that the majority of students expressed a favorable opinion of Elsa Speak, which was used in their online pronunciation class (Yosintha, 2022). Also Hamad et al (2019) argue that YouTube videos and Listening Audio Tracks Imitation are very effective CALL tools for improving students' speaking skills. Students perceive Duolingo as a practical, beneficial, and inspiring app for learning English (Inayah et al., 2020). And research on using WhatsApp for ETL explains that students who utilized WhatsApp were able to improve their English language abilities, expand their vocabulary, and learn from their friends' blunders (Hamad, 2017). This current study focuses on the use of a speaking learning application called Fondi. The researcher chose the Fondi application because this application is relatively new and it is still rare to use this application to improve speaking skills. So the researcher thinks it is necessary to examine the use of the Fondi application more deeply. Fondi is an application that contains virtual where the user is like being in a place and can meet other people and talk to each other using English. Fondi was developed by *PT Digital Bahasa Teknologi*, an educational technology company in Indonesia. Fondi is designed to help users who want to improve their English speaking skills in a fun and interactive way. Fondi users can practice their conversation skills with people around the world (Mildayanti, 2023). So why choose Fondi? Because most of Fondi's users have English as their second language, there are hardly any native speakers. This makes it very easy for beginners to learn English speaking because Fondi users are both people who are learning to speak English. On the other hand, the language structure of Fondi users is still easy to understand and hear by the interlocutor. Of course, this makes it very easy for students in class to have conversations with other people from all over the world. The following are some of the menus in the Fondi application:



Figure 1. Icon of Fondi



Figure 2. First Page after Registration



Figure 3. Change your Avatar



Figure 4. Choose the Place for Conversation

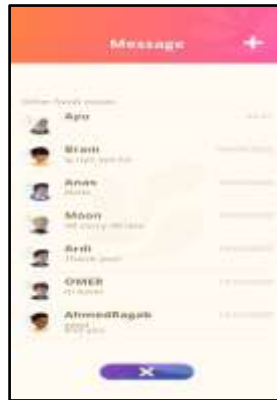


Figure 5. Chat and Make Appointments with Friends



Figure 6. Make your Hand



Figure 7. Pay for Subscriptions

The techniques in the Fondi application provide a menu that is quite large and comfortable for beginners and users can feel as if they are in a place and meet people around the world. This makes it easy for students or people who want to practice speaking skills without having to go somewhere to meet people from other countries.

Based on the gap in this study, this study focuses on using the Fondi application for speaking practice media. For this reason, there are three research questions in this study, as follows:

1. What are the students' perception toward the use Fondi application for speaking practice?
2. What are the benefits of the Fondi application for students?
3. What are the obstacles faced by students while using the Fondi application for speaking practice?.

The study's research makes a substantial contribution to the fields of technology-enhanced learning and English language education. Firstly, this study offers insightful information about the potential of technology. Information and communication technology integration improves academic performance and increases students' interest in self-awareness, motivation, and comfort with the study process (Sultanova, 2019). Particularly the Fondi application, to improve junior high school learners' speaking abilities.

Second, by concentrating on Fondi, a relatively recent and underutilized platform, this study adds to the body of knowledge already available on language learning applications. This study is the first to examine Fondi's usefulness as a language-learning tool.

Thirdly, the study focuses on the advantages and drawbacks of utilizing the Fondi application to practice speaking. Educators and developers may improve the application's features and make it a more efficient and user-friendly tool for improving English speaking skills by studying the benefits and obstacles faced by students.

In conclusion, this study makes a contribution by examining the Fondi application's potential to close the speaking proficiency gap in Indonesian English education and by highlighting the advantages and difficulties that students face when using Fondi for speaking practice. These results can help educators, decision-makers, and innovators improve English language training within and outside of the Indonesian educational system.

## METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method and uses Narrative Inquiry approach, This approach is a strength for qualitative methods Mawardi (2018) and Narrative Inquiry is the best approach to getting stories from sources in detail by Clandinin and Connelly (Ford, 2020), thus the data obtained can be insightful and clear. The collecting data by interviewing five students. Interviews in a study are important to obtain information from sources that will later be used as data for research (Raharjo, 2013). Fatchan (2016) states that interviews have the advantage of being able to present broad and in-depth data, and interviews contain direct thoughts from participants. So that the data obtained is direct and pure from the source. This can strengthen the data provided for later research. The five students interviewed were students from one of the junior high schools in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. These five students are students who are in a special class, namely the excellent language program. They have a special time during school hours to study English material.

In collecting data, researchers conducted interviews directly with five students, they are eighth-grade students with details of two boys and three girls. They are students who are placed in a class that is an excellent language program. The questions for the interview use English, and they answer in English to try to keep improving their speaking skills. This interview was conducted on two days, the first day of interviews was conducted with three female students and the second day was conducted with two male students. And on average, these interviews were conducted for around 20-30 minutes with each student. The interviews were not time-consuming as they focused on student perceptions and were conducted during break time.

In the data analysis phase, to provide quality data, several phases are needed in analyzing data in qualitative research, The first is collecting data based on research questions. Data collection in this study is through interviews with students who have used the Fondi application for speaking practice. The second data analysis step is to reduce and categorize the data. This reduction process sorts out the data obtained or simplifies the data from the field. After reducing the data, the researcher categorizes or groups the data as needed, so that the data is not miscategorized and good interpretation skills are needed for researchers. The third stage is data

display, this stage needs to be done after reducing and categorizing the data so that the data is easy to understand and allows conclusions to be drawn. And the last stage is concluding. This conclusion contains important information and new findings obtained from data processing.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Results**

#### ***Students' Perception of Using Fondi Application to Speaking Practice***

Five students were interviewed with questions about their perceptions of using the Fondi application for speaking practice. And the answers of the five students are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> student

*“Previously, I have never used any application to practice my speaking skill, and I just read the conversation in my book to practice my speaking skill, after I use the Fondi application, I know that Fondi application is a good application to help me to practice my speaking skill”*

2<sup>nd</sup> student

*“For my speaking practice, I just doing a conversation with my friends in the dorm and classroom, and I never used any application, and this is my first time using the Fondi application to practice my speaking skill, so in my mind, Fondi application is the application that makes it easier to practice my speaking ability”*

3<sup>rd</sup> student

*“I never practice my speaking skill before and I never use any application to help me improve my speaking skill, and I think Fondi is good, I can practice speaking directly with the other person”*

4<sup>th</sup> student

*“I practice speaking with my friends and read some conversations in my book and I ever use the Duolingo application, but this application is more focus on writing, so to practice my speaking I like using Fondi and it is easy to use, and I like using the Fondi application because I can help each other and learn together with fellow Fondi users”*

5<sup>th</sup> student

*“To improve my speaking skill, sometimes I practice my speaking with my friends in the classroom and I never use any application to practice my speaking. Then I use the Fondi application and I like using the Fondi application because I can explore new places to make new friends*

Four of the interviewed participants stated that they have never used any application to practice speaking, only having conversations with other classmates, therefore their speaking improvement is still lacking. Only one participant has used an application, but that application is more focused on writing.

Five participants stated their perceptions when using the Fondi application to practice speaking, that the Fondi application is a good application, easy to use, and supports improving speaking skills. In addition, in the Fondi application, users can support each other and learn together by practicing speaking skills.

#### ***The Benefits of Fondi Application for Students***

Three students explained the benefits of the Fondi application for their speaking practice. The three students' answers about the benefits of using the Fondi application for speaking practice are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> student

*".....Because of Fondi application is easy to use, I feel happy to use it and I am more enthusiastic to improve my speaking skills"*

2<sup>nd</sup> student

*"I like Fondi. When I meet other Indonesians, I can ask questions when I don't know the meaning in English, so I am not hesitant to continue practicing using the Fondi application"*

3<sup>rd</sup> student

*"I feel enjoyed, and happy because I can meet with new friends through the chat menu on the Fondi application, we can make an appointment to have a conversation on Fondi, and sometimes I ask other users about the correct structure of English by using chat, so I spirit to use Fondi Application for my speaking practice"*

From the statements of the three students, it can be concluded that there are several benefits that students feel while utilizing the Fondi application for speaking practice. First, the Fondi application is easy to use, making students more enthusiastic to improve their speaking skills. Second, most of the Fondi application users are second language, thus the Fondi application users may support each other in improving their speaking skills. Third, Fondi users can make a schedule to practice speaking and improve each other's English structure through the chat menu.

From this conclusion, it can be stated that there is more interest from students to use the Fondi application for speaking practice. Supported by the menu provided in the Fondi application, this is a special attraction, especially for users who want to improve their speaking skills.

### ***The Obstacles Faced By Students While Using the Fondi Application for Speaking Practice.***

Besides the positive statements that students have provided about the Fondi application, both perceptions and benefits about the Fondi application, it also appears that there are negative statements that students provide, which are regarding the obstacles faced by students while using the Fondi application. Three students answered the interview statement about the obstacles they faced while using the Fondi application. The students' answers are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> student

*".....I like it but I was afraid to try when I first started using Fondi because I had to speak directly with other Fondi users, even though I'm talking directly virtually I just feel nervous and afraid to use Fondi for the first time"*

2<sup>nd</sup> student

*".....It's difficult, when I spoke with people from Algeria, I had trouble understanding what they were saying, maybe it's because we are second language users "*

3<sup>rd</sup> student

*"Fondi has a subscription and it's quite expensive, I usually use Fondi for free so there is a time limit of about only fifteen minutes to do conversations, and if the signal instability sometimes the conversation stops".*

From the answers of the three students about the obstacles they encountered when using the Fondi application, it could be concluded that, first, for beginners using the Fondi application is a challenging task because users speak directly to other users, which can cause a sense of anxiety

and nervousness to start a conversation. Second, when talking directly to a second language user, there could be a misunderstanding of what is being said. Third, the Fondi application must be paid to get unlimited conversation and it is considered expensive for students, and the Fondi application should be supported by the Internet, usually, the conversation will stop by default if the Internet is unstable.

## **Discussion**

### ***Students' Perception of Using Fondi Application to Speaking Practice***

The results of the interviews of the five students are all expressing positive perceptions in the sense that they like the Fondi application to practice their speaking skills. As part of ICT, Fondi is an effective application that can help improve students' speaking skills. ICT improves the experience of learning a language and can be a useful tool for both teaching and learning (Hashemi, 2016). Zhu (2018) contends that the students were satisfied with using mobile applications for English language learning and decided to utilize them primarily due to exams and work. Utari (2019) also argues that the Android-based 'Technical English' application facilitates students in learning English and with this application students can be motivated in learning English. These studies found that students had positive perceptions toward the use of mobile applications in language learning, including increased motivation and engagement.

### ***The Benefits of Fondi Application for Students***

Many applications can be used in the English learning process. This application can effectively increase student learning motivation and student learning outcomes, especially in English. Similarly, Ramadhani (2023) states that the use of the Quizizz application can increase student enthusiasm and increase student learning motivation.

Also, the easy use of the Fondi application supported by an interesting menu inside can increase students' enthusiasm for speaking practice and improve their speaking skills. This statement is similar to Zulfikar (2022) English learning applications provide various features, this can be attractive for students to use.

### ***The Obstacles Faced By Students While Using the Fondi Application for Speaking Practice.***

Several obstacles are also faced by students in using the Fondi application. Every application, whether it is available on mobile phones only or even available on mobile phones and PC, certainly has disadvantages, which will be one of the obstacles faced by students when using the application.

The first obstacle that students faced is expensive subscription fees. Winans (2020) contends that the fees offered by the *Busuu* application, which must be paid per month, might be a bit expensive for beginner language learners. The second is students find difficulty understanding the spoken words of the interlocutors in the Fondi application; especially users from other countries who use English as their second language. Locksley (2015) argues that a lack of grammar skills and inexperience in speaking can contribute to misunderstandings in English conversations. And the third obstacle is the Fondi application's need for internet support. Therefore, if the internet is not supported properly, the use of the Fondi application is also disrupted. Similarly, Rasman (2021) argues that Internet connection must be stable because this determines whether learning through technology is effective or not. Therefore, application users must ensure a stable internet connection to maximize the use of English learning applications.

While this study provides valuable insights into students' perceptions of using the Fondi app for speaking practice, it is important to recognize the limitations of this study. Firstly, the study focused on a relatively small sample of five students from a particular junior high school in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia, and focused on students in the English Excellent class program. This limited sample may not represent the diversity of experiences and perspectives of students from different backgrounds and regions. In addition, as this study relied solely on



interviews to collect data, it is possible that the data results may not have been very robust in accuracy and did not capture a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions. Samples can provide data for research. (Sudrajat, 2019). Future research could benefit from a larger and more diverse sample, as well as a mixed-methods approach that incorporates surveys or observations to triangulate findings.

Building upon the findings of this research, future studies could explore several avenues for further investigation. Firstly, conducting a comparative analysis of the Fondi application with other language-learning apps, such as Duolingo or ELSA Speaks, could provide a broader understanding of its effectiveness in improving speaking skills. This comparison could involve a larger and more diverse participant pool to draw more robust conclusions.

Secondly, investigating the impact of Fondi on long-term speaking proficiency and fluency would be valuable. As students make sustained gains in their English-speaking ability, the initial positive perceptions and advantages may have been realized, according to longitudinal research that monitors their development over time (Saito, 2017).

Lastly, it would be useful to evaluate how the Fondi application adapts and develops over time to suit the changing demands of students and educators given the developing nature of educational technology and language acquisition. This field of study could provide information on improving and evolving language learning software through time.

In conclusion, while this study provides insight into students' perceptions of using the Fondi application for speaking practice, there is still plenty of opportunity for future research to explore its effectiveness in greater detail, address limitations, and advance the development of language learning technologies.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study set out to investigate students' perceptions of using the Fondi application as a tool for improving their English speaking skills in a junior high school setting. The research objectives were to understand how students perceived the Fondi application, identify the benefits they derived from using it, and uncover any obstacles they encountered. The study also aimed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on language learning applications by focusing on a relatively new and underutilized platform.

This research makes several unique contributions to the fields of technology-enhanced learning and English language education. Firstly, it sheds light on the potential of the Fondi application, a platform that has received limited attention in academic research. Secondly, the research emphasizes the importance of understanding students' perceptions and experiences when using educational technology. By capturing students' voices and perspectives, the study provides valuable insights that can inform the development of language learning applications and teaching methodologies.

The findings of this study revealed that students generally held positive perceptions of the Fondi application for speaking practice. The benefits included the opportunity to interact with other learners, receive support from fellow users, and explore new places virtually. However, students also faced obstacles, including the expense of subscription fees, difficulties in understanding non-native speakers, and the requirement for stable internet connectivity.

The explanation of the limitations of this research is the study relied on a small sample of five students from a specific junior high school program, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the data collection method only focuses on interviews, which allows for less strength in the data obtained.

Future research in this area should Conduct comparative studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the Fondi application against other language learning apps, investigate the long-term impact of Fondi on students' speaking proficiency and fluency, explore strategies to mitigate obstacles, such as affordability, comprehension of non-native speakers, and internet connectivity and monitor how the Fondi application evolves over time to meet changing educational technology and language learning needs.

In summary, this study contributes valuable insights into students' perceptions of the Fondi application, highlighting both its benefits and challenges. While the research offers a unique perspective on a relatively new platform, it is just the beginning of the journey in understanding how technology can enhance English language education. Future research endeavors will continue to shape and refine the role of educational technology in language learning.

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