The Effect of SmallTalk2Me in English Instruction at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the effectiveness of SmallTalk2Me as a learning tool, identify obstacles during its implementation, and investigate the role of SmallTalk2Me as an English speaking learning media at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto. This study used a mixed-methods approach, and data were collected from 26 male students through an English speaking test, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The results showed a significant improvement in students' speaking skill, though the effectiveness was limited by technical challenges such as unstable internet and noise in the classroom. Students preferred a blend of AI tools and traditional teaching methods. The study highlighted the potential of SmallTalk2Me in enhancing English speaking but recommended addressing infrastructure issues and incorporating longer implementation periods. Further research was suggested to focus on the long-term impact of AI-powered tools in language learning.

Keywords: SmallTalk2Me; AI; Speaking Skill.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, knowing English is more than just a skill, it is a necessity. English has become a global language of communication, spanning cultures, industries, and continents. Learning English is very important because it allows you to communicate effectively with your brothers and sisters all over the world (Putra, 2020). Its importance lies in its ability to connect people from different backgrounds. Which facilitates smooth communication in different areas of life such as business, academia or everyday conversation. Mastering English at a young age not only lays the foundation for future language skills, but also increases confidence and fluency in expressing thoughts and ideas. Learning English in middle school is very important in today's educational environment. At the junior high school level, it provides a foundation for students to develop key communication skills at an early age.

Speaking is the most important skill among all four language skills so that we can communicate well in this global world (Rao, 2019). English speaking skill becomes the most important skill to learn for students to prepare for their future career in global industry. Since English is widely used throughout the world, students must master it. Because, becoming fluent in English speaking can open doors to new career paths, improve communication, and provide access to a wide range of global resources and information.

The advancement of artificial intelligence technology into education is changing learning styles for students and teachers. AI can help personalize each student's learning experience, allowing them to learn at their own pace and according to their individual needs and abilities (Alneyadi et al., 2023). By analyzing massive amounts of data, AI algorithms can identify areas where students may need additional support or challenges, enable assistance towards learning targets, and adaptive learning pathways. This can lead to improved learning outcomes and better student performance.

In particular, language learning offers many abilities to integrate artificial intelligence-based technologies (Edmett et al., 2023). Using AI for learning English gives some advantages. AI can adjust the difficulty level by the learner's performance. Learning process becomes fun and enjoyable because of fun media resources and interactive exercises. Through mobile apps, online platforms, or virtual classrooms which we can access language learning resources anytime and anywhere. AI receives immediate feedback and performance analytics, and students are able to identify areas of strength and areas that require

improvement, allowing for efficient skill development and targeted practice. One of AI tool to learn English speaking is SmallTalk2Me. Based on the SmallTalk2Me website SmallTalk2Me is an AI-powered speaking assistant that helps English learner in practicing English speaking everywhere and improve your communication skills by recording and AI-analyzing your speech without a teacher or a speaking partner. It also makes accurate and almost instant English-level assessment.

Based on the previous study about AI in education, especially in learning English speaking skill, AI gives big help for learners. AI tool can monitor and give feedback to students accurately (Rukiati et al., 2023). SmallTalk2Me is able to provide immediate feedback and recommendations for improvement by comparing their fluency, intonation, and pronunciation to those user so students are able to identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement, allowing for efficient skill development and targeted practice (Manggiasih et al., 2023). SmallTalk2Me is available to use as learning tool which can be used by everyone who wants to learn English speaking skill everywhere and everytime.

To produce graduates who are able to speak English and Arabic, MTs Pesantren Al-Amin has an excellent program, namely the Language Program for Students. MTs Pesantren Al-Amin is a private school sponsored by Al-Amin Islamic Boarding School in the Sooko Mojokerto region of East Java. By following technological developments, students are expected to use laptops during teaching and learning activities in class.

METHOD

This study uses a mixed methods approach with a convergent parallel design which quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously but analyzed separately, and the results are merged or integrated (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research instruments include English speaking tests such as pre-tests and post-tests, observation, interviews, and open-ended questionnaires. English speaking test scores are analyzed using paired sample t-tests and n-gain tests with the SPSS 30 application. The implementation is conducted over nine sessions at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto, focusing on 26 male students from class 8A. The procedures taken in this study are:
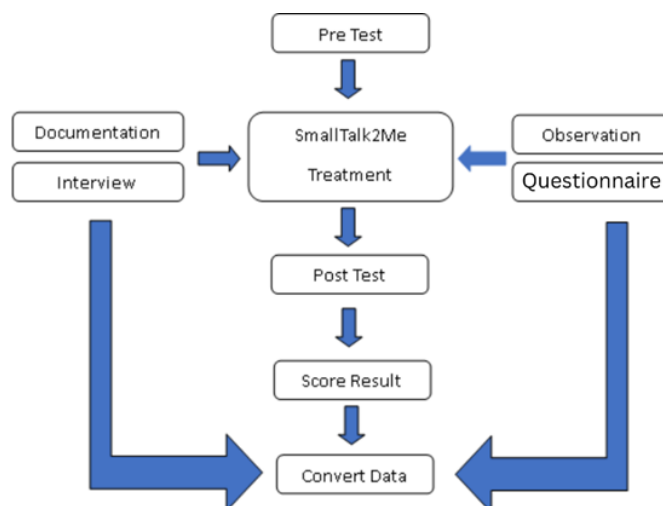

Figure 1. Research Procedure Steps

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

The research findings were obtained by using research instruments in the form of English speaking test, field note observations, open questionnaires, documentation, and interviews.

- ***English Speaking Test***

Data on the effect of SmallTalk2Me implementation on English speaking ability were obtained from English speaking test instrument in the form of pretest and posttest. Here were the results:

Table 1 PreTest and PostTest Score

STUDENT	PRE TEST	POST TEST	STUDENT	PRE TEST	POST TEST
1	7	12	14	4	10
2	6	12	15	10	12
3	11	13	16	8	10
4	11	15	17	8	8
5	13	12	18	11	8
6	9	13	19	9	10
7	12	11	20	10	12
8	10	11	21	8	11
9	12	14	22	11	13
10	7	14	23	8	9
11	14	15	24	8	14
12	13	14	25	6	8
13	14	14	26	4	8

The above score was analyzed To find data on effectiveness and significance, an N-gain test was needed to find the effectiveness and a paired sample T-test to find the correlation and the significance. The following are the results obtained.

Table 2 Paired Sample Test Result

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					t	df	Significance	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
					Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pre Test - Post Test	-2.269	2.442	0.479	-3.256	-1.283	-4.738	25	<0.001	<0.001

Table 3 N-Gain Score Result

NO	PRE TEST	POST TEST	N GAIN SCORE	N GAIN SCORE (%)
1	7	12	0.38	38
2	6	12	0.43	43
3	11	13	0.22	22
4	11	15	0.44	44
5	13	12	-0.14	-14
6	9	13	0.36	36
7	12	11	-0.13	-13
8	10	11	0.10	10
9	12	14	0.25	25
10	7	14	0.54	54
11	14	15	0.17	17
12	13	14	0.14	14
13	14	14	0.00	0
14	4	10	0.38	38
15	10	12	0.20	20
16	8	10	0.17	17
17	8	8	0.00	0
18	11	8	-0.33	-33

NO	PRE TEST	POST TEST	N GAIN SCORE	N GAIN SCORE (%)
19	9	10	0.09	9
20	10	12	0.20	20
21	8	11	0.25	25
22	11	13	0.22	22
23	8	9	0.08	8
24	8	14	0.50	50
25	6	8	0.14	14
26	4	8	0.25	25

Table 4 Average Score of N-Gain Score

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
%N-Gain Score	26	-33	54	18.93
N-Gain Score	26	-0.33	0.54	0.1893
Valid N (listwise)	26			

Based on the table above (table 2), there is a difference or significance if the Significant value (Two-Sided p) < 0.05. On the other hand, there is no difference or is not significant if the Significant value (Two-Sided p) is > 0.05 (Sukarelawan et al., 2024). It meant that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, it could be concluded that the difference did not occur by chance, and there was a significant change between the two tests.

The average result obtained from the total N-Gain score (table 3) is 0.1893 and the score in percentage form is 18.93%. In conclusion, based on the N-gain criteria table below (table 5), the implementation of the SmallTalk2Me platform for seven days with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of SmallTalk2Me as English speaking learning media at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto is ineffective. This suggests the need for further evaluation of the implementation of the SmallTalk2Me platform to improve the effectiveness as a learning media for English speaking skill in the classroom, especially considering the relatively short implementation period of seven days.

Table 5 Criteria for Level of Effectiveness (Sukarelawan et al., 2024)

Percentage (%)	Description
< 40	Ineffective
40 – 55	Less Effective
56 – 75	Quite Effective
>76	Effective

In conclusion, the results indicated that the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, reflecting a meaningful change. These findings suggested that the methods applied between the tests had a notable impact, potentially leading to positive outcomes. However, despite the observed significance in the test scores, the N-gain criteria table revealed that the implementation of the SmallTalk2Me platform over a seven-day period at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto had proven ineffective in improving English speaking skill. This disconnect between the statistical significance and the overall effectiveness of the platform highlighted the need for further evaluation. It suggested that while the platform showed potential for positive change, the short duration of the trial may not have been sufficient to fully assess its impact. Therefore, further modifications and extended implementation periods were necessary to enhance its effectiveness as a learning tool.

- ***The Obstacle Factors in Implementing SmallTalk2Me***

The study identified several obstacles in implementing the SmallTalk2Me platform through observations, interviews, documentation, and open-ended questionnaires. One significant obstacle was the unstable of the Wi-Fi connection, which caused frequent disruptions in platform use. These interruptions affected lesson continuity, delayed application responses, and frustrated. The lack of a stable connection hindered students' ability to stay engaged.

Another obstacle was the absence of a translation feature in the platform, which posed difficulties for

students who were not native speakers of the language of instruction. Without the ability to translate instructions or app content into their preferred language, these students struggled to engage fully with the platform. They often relied on external tools to understand the material, leading to frequent interruptions and additional effort, further highlighting the need for more inclusive language accessibility features.

The last obstacle was the importance of individual headsets in mitigating classroom noise, which often interfered with the platform's speech recognition capabilities. Without headsets, background noise and overlapping voices disrupted the natural flow of activities, causing delays and decreased productivity. These challenges underscored the need for improved connectivity, translation features, and headsets to enhance the platform's usability and ensure a more effective learning experience.

The study identified three main obstacles in using the SmallTalk2Me platform such as unstable Wi-Fi, the lack of a translation feature, and the need of individual headsets. Unstable Wi-Fi disrupted lessons and engagement, while the absence of translation options made it difficult for non-native speakers to follow content. Additionally, the lack of headsets led to classroom noise interfering with speech recognition. These challenges highlighted the need for better connectivity, language support, and audio equipment to improve the platform's effectiveness.

- ***SmallTalk2Me as an English speaking learning media***

The study on SmallTalk2Me as an English-speaking learning medium at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto revealed varied responses to teaching approaches, first experiences, and the instant feedback feature. Students showed different preferences for learning methods. Some favored SmallTalk2Me for its flexibility and engaging interactive features, enabling independent learning anytime. Others preferred the traditional teacher-led method for its clarity, direct explanations, and supportive atmosphere. A group of students appreciated a combined approach, balancing the benefits of technology and teacher interaction for an optimal learning experience. These responses highlight the diverse needs and preferences of learners in adopting new educational tools.

Students' first experiences with SmallTalk2Me were overwhelmingly positive, as the platform was found to be user-friendly and accessible. They appreciated the smooth sign-up process, which allowed them to quickly get started by linking their Google accounts. The variety of topics offered made learning personal and engaging, catering to individual interests and goals. Additionally, the browser-based accessibility eliminated the need for downloads, ensuring easy use across devices. These features minimized technical barriers, making SmallTalk2Me particularly suitable for students new to technology-enhanced education, fostering motivation and enthusiasm for language learning.

The instant feedback feature of SmallTalk2Me emerged as a crucial component in enhancing students' language acquisition. It provided detailed, immediate corrections on pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, enabling learners to identify and address specific weaknesses. This feature also helped students build vocabulary through contextually relevant topics, enriching their communication skills. By offering practical and actionable insights, the feedback system encouraged students to track their progress and develop confidence in speaking English. Overall, the instant feedback not only guided students effectively but also empowered them to take a proactive approach to improving their language proficiency.

The study on SmallTalk2Me as an English-learning tool at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto revealed diverse student preferences. Some appreciated its flexibility and interactive features for independent learning, while others preferred the traditional teacher-led method. A combined approach, integrating both technology and teacher interaction, was favored by some students for optimal learning. The platform's user-friendly design, accessible sign-up, and a variety of engaging topics contributed to positive first experiences. The instant feedback feature, offering real-time corrections on pronunciation, grammar, and fluency, proved crucial in enhancing language acquisition and boosting students' confidence.

Discussion

This section presents a discussion based on the results of the study. This section discusses the effect of SmallTalk2Me as English speaking learning media at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto, the obstacle factors in implementing SmallTalk2Me at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto and the role of SmallTalk2Me at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto.

- ***The Effect of SmallTalk2Me on Students' English Speaking Skill***

Although this study found a significant improvement in students' speaking abilities based on the paired sample t-test results, the low N-Gain score indicates limited effectiveness of SmallTalk2Me in enhancing English speaking skill. This finding contrasts with Manggiasih et al (2023), who argued that

SmallTalk2Me provides instant feedback and adaptive capabilities, significantly aiding users in improving their speaking skill through continuous practice. Furthermore, Ulinuha and Parnawati (2024) emphasized that the application consistently helped dentistry students achieve higher levels of fluency and grammar accuracy. This discrepancy suggests that a longer implementation period or adjustments in the teaching approach might be required to replicate similar outcomes.

- ***The Obstacle Factors in Implementing SmallTalk2Me***

This study identified technical barriers, such as unstable internet connections, the absence of a translation feature, and background noise interference, as major challenges in implementing SmallTalk2Me. However, Manggiasih et al (2023) highlighted that the application is designed to provide ease of access and flexibility in language assessments, even for large groups, as it can be accessed anytime and anywhere. Similarly, Ulinuha and Parnawati (2024) noted that SmallTalk2Me was successfully utilized in large classrooms of up to 78 students without significant technical difficulties. These contrasting findings suggest that local infrastructure and the learning environment play a critical role in determining the successful implementation of such technology.

- ***SmallTalk2Me as an English speaking learning media***

The findings of this study reveal that some students preferred traditional learning methods involving direct teacher interaction, as they felt it offered more personalized explanations and real-time responses. However, Manggiasih et al (2023) reported that SmallTalk2Me enhances students' motivation through its quick and accurate feedback system, which is considered one of its main strengths. Similarly, Ulinuha and Parnawati (2024) found that dentistry students appreciated the platform's interactive features, which helped them address specific weaknesses such as pronunciation and vocabulary. These discrepancies highlight that students' preferences may vary based on their learning contexts and individual needs, suggesting that a blended learning approach could offer a more inclusive solution.

In conclusion, SmallTalk2Me showed some positive effects on students' speaking skill at MTs Pesantren Al-Amin Sooko Mojokerto, but its overall impact was limited, as indicated by the low N-Gain score. Technical challenges, such as poor internet connection and lack of translation features, reduced its full potential. Students had mixed responses, with some preferring traditional methods, while others valued the flexibility and interactivity of the app. These findings suggested that a blended learning approach could be more effective in meeting diverse student needs.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion is about the effectiveness of SmallTalk2Me, the obstacles factors in the implementation of SmallTalk2Me, and the role of Smalltalk2Me as a media for learning to speak English. The implementation of SmallTalk2Me demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in students' English-speaking skill, as shown by the paired sample t-test results. However, the N-Gain analysis categorized the improvement as low, indicating limited effectiveness during the short seven-day implementation period.

Technical challenges such as unstable Wi-Fi, lack of translation features, and insufficient access to headsets hindered the platform's effective implementation. These barriers also disrupted student engagement and limited the practical use of SmallTalk2Me in achieving its intended outcomes. The role of SmallTalk2Me as an English speaking learning media is to provide a flexible and interactive tool for improving students English speaking skill. It allows students to learn independently, offering various topics and instant feedback on pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. It complements traditional methods by supporting independent practice alongside teacher guidance.

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