



FALOU AI IN PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE: INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES

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Abstract

This research studies students' viewpoints on the Falou application as a tool in improving EFL students' English pronunciation skills at the State Islamic University of Mataram. The data were collected through interviews, observation, and documentation from 10 students who were in different semesters and were applied through a descriptive qualitative approach. Findings reveal that most students provided positive feedback concerning the Falou application because they were motivated because Falou application is easy to access, real-time, and interactive with easy measuring pronouncing correctness. Students also expressed high self-confidence when interacting with the application. Some challenges are expressed including limited feature access, random AI misrecognition, and distracting advertisements. The present study discusses possibilities for the Falou application used as an effective supplementary mechanism for English language learning pronunciation practice.

Keywords: AI in language learning; EFL students; Falou application; Pronunciation

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INTRODUCTION

Using technology is normal in this age of globalization. It should come as no surprise that teachers and educational institutions use technology to improve and facilitate learning. Utilizing technology in the classroom facilitates easier and more efficient learning. It saves time, money, and resources while helping schools reach their goals (Manongga, 2022). Using technology in English teaching has so many benefits, especially in the globalization era; using technology makes learning the English language easier (Suhandra & Ariawan, 2023). Having technology in the English classroom lets teachers use different ways to teach their students, such as using media like TV and phones or using the internet. (Li, 2024) stated that technology can provide a portable, connected, context-sensitive, location-sensitive, multifunctional, and ubiquitous learning environment for foreign language learners. Students can improve their listening, reading, and writing abilities through the media and the Internet (Altun & Ahmad, 2021). So, when language is used properly, it can project a very good image (Kholidi et al., 2022). Technology is one of the key parts of modern learning in today's era (Ulfa et al., 2025).

One of the technologies that appears in today's era is AI (Artificial Intelligence). The term artificial intelligence, or AI for short, is a relatively modern technological discovery that is beginning to gain popularity as a tool for imitating human behavior (Fitria, 2021). AI technology can provide answers to all questions asked. However, behind the convenience offered by AI, there is also another problem, which is that if it is continuously used, it will make students lazy to learn because they are used to getting instant answers without a thinking process (Fauziyati, 2023).

One such AI-assisted tool is Falou. Falou is an application that can help in learning languages. There are 20 languages available in Falou for language learning. It can download the application from the Play store and App store. Pronunciation and language skills can be improved with the use of this application (Saragih et al., 2024). Falou is a modern language learning application that focuses on conversational practice to help users gain fluency quickly. Unlike traditional methods that heavily emphasize grammar and memorization, Falou encourages users to participate in everyday conversations from the early stages of learning.

One of Falou's key features is an AI-powered pronunciation tool called MonkeyBrain. This tool provides real-time corrections, allowing users to correct and refine their pronunciation while learning (Korzekwa, 2022). With this feature, learners can improve their speaking skills by getting immediate feedback on their mistakes, allowing them to reach their desired target faster (Dai, 2022). Falou's AI adjusts learning materials based on each user's progress, making the learning process more efficient as it is customized by each user. Falou also provides conversation exercises to practice speaking in real-life scenarios, such as ordering food at a restaurant or asking for directions. This makes it easier for users to develop confidence in their speaking skills.

To use Falou, the first step is to download the application from your device's app store. After signing up, you can choose the language you want to learn from over 30 language options, including popular languages such as English, Spanish, French, and Korean. Next, you will be guided through interactive lessons that focus on speaking. The application starts by having you speak in a dialog, and as you proceed, you'll be asked to repeat sentences, with the MonkeyBrain AI correcting your pronunciation in real time. You can practice as much as you need, customizing the lessons based on your availability. The more you practice, the more the AI adjusts future lessons according to your learning pace and areas for improvement.

Technology-enhanced language learning has emerged as a promising approach in bilingual education, incorporating various technologies to support language acquisition (Khusniyah & Ariawan, 2024). TELL is based on constructivist, sociocultural, and cognitive load theories, emphasizing active learning and cultural exchange (Peguero, 2024). It encompasses diverse tools such as computer-assisted language learning, mobile applications, and virtual reality. It provides a collaborative learning environment, improving students' language knowledge and affective status (Su & Zou, 2022). Assemblage theory helps examine the complexity, subjectivity, and temporality of TELL in classroom settings (Matthews, 2019). Studies have shown that TELL can positively impact students' language skills, motivation, and overall learning outcomes (Ghanizadeh et al., 2015). TELL supports collaborative learning of students by letting them collectively work on problem-solving activities, sharing information. Though a number of advantages exist concerning TELL, issues also persist, like a limited facility of technology, and teachers have to be trained for their work (Peguero, 2024).

In the context of English language learning, numerous research studies have investigated the utilization of applications and artificial intelligence to enhance language proficiency. (Huang et al., 2023) investigated the incorporation of AI in language instruction by an analysis of 516 publications from 2000 to 2019. The study examined prevalent AI trends, challenges, and applications. Data was extracted from the Web of Science (WoS), Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), and Scopus databases. The results indicate that artificial intelligence is progressively utilized in language education, particularly in automatic writing evaluation (AWE), intelligent tutoring systems (ITS) for reading and writing, and natural language processing. Meanwhile, (Abimanto & Mahendro, 2023) evaluated the effectiveness of AI in English learning at AMNI Maritime University. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study involved 100 students and found significant improvements in their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills after interacting with AI. Both researchers investigated the impact of AI on English language learning, but they tackled the topic from different perspectives and remained very wide. Therefore, this study is different, as it will focus on the use of the Falou application for English language learning.

The application of Falou for language learning, particularly English, has piqued the curiosity of several researchers. Saragih et al., (2024) studied the effect of the Falou application on the speaking abilities of students at Madrasah Aliyah Al-Washliyah in Tebing Tinggi, with a total of 60 students from two classes (30 in the experimental group and 30 in the control group). The study employed a quantitative and post-test design, as well as data collection via tests conducted before and after the application used. The studies revealed that Falou had a considerable impact on pupils' speaking skills. And then, a study by Mohamed & Alian (2023) investigated the attitudes of English as a foreign language (EFL) students regarding chatbot usage in Egypt, involving 64 first-year secondary school learners. Utilizing a survey method with a 20-item Likert scale questionnaire, the study discovered that students were interested in utilizing chatbots autonomously, which promoted self-directed learning and encouraged language practice through simulated exchanges.

Another significant study by (Haryadi, S & Aprianoto, 2020) studied the impact of the integration of the English Pronunciation application on teaching pronunciation. Data were collected through observation and interview. The study revealed that the English pronunciation application was proven to increase students' participation, positive attitude, and self-learning in teaching pronunciation. Also, Senowarsito & Ardini (2023) studied the effectiveness of using artificial intelligence (AI) to improve the ability to learn pronunciation independently using ELSA Speak. The results of this study show that the use of AI, such as the ELSA Speak application, is effective in improving pronunciation skills and encouraging independent learning.

Moreover, Ariawan et al. (2021) studied perceptions and challenges experienced by students in learning to speak using the WhatsApp platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of students consider WhatsApp effective because it is practical and easy to use and can improve speaking skills through features such as voice notes and voice calls. Also, Widiyastuti et al. (2023) explore that Google Classroom is considered to have many advantages for online learning, such as giving you flexibility in terms of time and allowing you to save money. However, some issues need to be resolved, especially with regard to interaction and technical support. Overall, studies seek to improve students' language skills, notably in speaking; together, these studies provide a clear picture of how technology like AI can be useful to learn English skills. However, the apps examined differ. As a result, this study is unique in that it will focus primarily on training pronunciation abilities using the Falou application.

The Falou app offers a number of strengths that make it one of the effective applications for improving pronunciation. This Falou app can be accessed easily through downloading from Play store. In addition, this app adopts an immersive approach that places users in realistic conversational situations, such as at the airport or in a taxi, thus increasing engagement (Reimer et al., 2023). On the other hand, this app provides an advanced

pronunciation practice feature, where the user's voice is compared to a native speaker's, then provides feedback to correct pronunciation.

Despite those strengths, it also has some weaknesses. As pointed out by Saragih et al. (2024), a downside is the advertisements in the free version that need to be bypassed; although they aren't overly disruptive, they can detract from the learning experience. Furthermore, the app provides limited coverage of topics, particularly in advanced reading, writing, and grammar skills, as it primarily emphasizes conversational skills.

The Falou app requires enhancements in various areas, particularly in human interaction and the diversity of exercise content. Furthermore, offering a range of practice scenarios that closely relate to real-life situations will aid users in applying pronunciation more effectively (Tejedor-García et al., 2020). The reminder notifications also need refinement to ensure users remember to continue their studies. Additionally, reducing the number of advertisements in the free version could improve the ease of learning (Alsanousi et al., 2023). It is also essential for Falou to broaden its material offerings, especially in reading, writing, and grammar skills.

METHODS

This research methodology will use a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Kusumastuti & Khoiron (2019), descriptive qualitative research is a research strategy in which the researcher investigates events and phenomena of individuals' lives and asks a person or group of individuals to talk about their lives. This information is then retold by the researcher in a descriptive chronology. Descriptive qualitative is focused on answering research questions related to questions of who, what, where, and how an event or experience occurs until it is finally studied in depth to find patterns that appear in the event (Kim et al., 2016).

This study was conducted at one of the universities in Lombok, namely the State Islamic University of Mataram, which only focused on EFL students. The sample amounted to about 10 students, where the researcher chose participants based on their semester, namely semester 1, 3, and 5 (Arifin et al., 2023). The researcher's aim in taking this sample was to get diverse perspectives on Falou AI users in learning English pronunciation at different stages of learning. Whereas 1st-semester students may have just started their English learning experience on campus, 3rd-semester students are a bit more experienced in learning English, and 5th-semester students have more knowledge of English and experience with learning technologies. This difference allowed the researcher to observe the different effects of Falou AI on beginner, intermediate, and more experienced students.

To achieve the objectives of this study, before conducting data collection, the researchers first sought permission and consent from potential participants. After they are willing and agree, the researcher informs them that the researcher will conduct the observation at such an hour on such a day.

Observations were made by researchers of the participants after they understood what Falou AI was and how it was used. The researcher observed how their expressions were when using the application, whether they experienced difficulties or problems in using the application, and others. After that, the researcher conducted interviews after the participants used the application for approximately 10 days. Next, the researcher conducted qualitative data analysis, which is to obtain valid and well-reasoned conclusions from descriptive data in the form of written or oral words (Suwandi, 2021).

In this study, data collection methods will include interviews, observation, and documentation. chosen to gain an understanding of pronunciation in using the Falou app. Interviews are a data collection technique that involves direct interaction between researchers and research participants. Qualitative interviews aim to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences, views, and perspectives of individuals related to the phenomenon under study (Ardiansyah et al., 2023). Another technique is observation; according to Hasanah (2017), observation research is the process of systematic observation of human activities in the place where these activities take place.

In addition, a data collection tool used for these methods is documentation. This documentation serves as a complementary method to interviews and observations by offering a different perspective and helping to corroborate data collected from primary sources (Rathjens et al., 2023). This could include feedback from users, app usage data, or records of participants' progress in the Falou app. To ensure the validity of the data, researchers used triangulation techniques by comparing the results of interviews and observations. In addition, the researcher also conducted member checking by asking for confirmation from participants regarding the transcribed interviews to avoid misunderstandings or inaccurate interpretations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the observation, there are several main aspects, namely operation, usage practice, user response, help clarification, and app understanding. It is found that on the operation of the app, most of the participants managed to open, download, and log in to the Falou app without any technical problems. Most of them also seemed to focus on paying attention to the observer's explanation of the app's features. Most of the participants showed ease in following the initial usage instructions, and then within a few minutes, they seemed to be quite fluent in using the application. However, there were some participants who seemed distracted by the video advertisements that appeared during the use of the app. On the pronunciation practice aspect, the majority of participants used the voice recognition feature when trying the pronunciation practice feature to evaluate their pronunciation accuracy. The participants seemed to take the exercises seriously, although some participants complained that the AI sometimes did not hear or recognize their voices clearly, especially when they spoke faster or when using certain accents. Most participants also made active efforts to improve their pronunciation based on the feedback given by the AI.

Then, in the aspect of participant response to application feedback, most of the participants showed positive reactions, such as smiling or looking satisfied when receiving feedback from the AI, namely when given a high score or suggestions for correcting improper pronunciation. Most of them also tried to repeat the wrong word or sentence so that they could pronounce it correctly. This shows that direct feedback from the AI succeeded in motivating them to correct and improve their pronunciation. And finally, in terms of understanding and comfort in using the app, some participants directly said that the app is very easy to use and its features are easy to understand. Most of them felt comfortable using this app for pronunciation practice. And at the end of the session, none of the participants asked any questions related to Falou AI and its features. This shows that this application is indeed easy to use and accessible to various levels of technical ability. The observation results can be seen in the table below.

Table:1: Observation result

No.	Aspects observed	Observation Statement/Indicators	Yes	No
1.	Operation	• Participants seemed interested and paid attention to the researcher's explanation of the use and features of the Falou app.	80%	20%
		• While listening to the explanation, participants were able to start opening and logging into the Falou app without any technical problems.	100%	0%
		• Participants understood and followed the initial usage instructions of the app.	90%	10%
		• Participants showed fluency in using the app interface after a few minutes.	60%	40%
2,	Usage Practice	• Participants tried the pronunciation practice feature in the first usage session.	100%	0%
		• Participants used the speech recognition feature to assess the accuracy of pronunciation.	70%	30%
		• Participants did not appear to have any difficulties when accessing and using the application.	60%	40%
3.	User Response	• Participants received and understood feedback from the app regarding mispronounced words/phrases.	90%	10%
		• Participants showed effort to correct pronunciation after receiving feedback.	50%	50%
		• Participants showed positive reactions (such as smiling) when receiving good feedback from the app.	80%	20%
4.	Help& Clarification	• Participants ask questions related to features they do not understand, especially those related to pronunciation.	10%	90%

		Participants ask for help to understand how to repeat a mispronounced word/phrase.	10%	90%
5.	App Understanding	Participants seemed comfortable and understood the use of the features and functionality of the application during the observation with available devices such as mobile phones or laptops.	80%	20%
		Participants showed enthusiasm or interest in the app during the pronunciation practice session.	70%	30%

The interviews added greater insight into the perceptions and experiences of EFL students when using Falou AI. There were 3 questions asked by the researcher to 10 participants from EFL students at State Islamic University of Mataram. These were their perceptions and experiences when using this application, how this application improves their pronunciation skills, and also what the challenges and difficulties faced when using this application are. Based on the results of this interview, there are several results that the researcher got, which are summarized as follows:

Perception and experience of Falou AI

Most respondents had a positive experience using the app. They said that this app is very fun because it is able to teach how to pronounce correctly with interactive features. This application can also be accessed anytime and anywhere, and in this application, there is also an AI that directly provides feedback if there is a pronunciation that is not correct.

R2: *This app can be my personal English tutor that I can access whenever I want.*

R1: *The app is easy to use and gives quick feedback on my pronunciation.*

R8: *This AI is very fun because we are also taught at the same time how to pronounce it correctly.*

But apart from the positive responses, there were also some participants who expressed negative experiences in using the app. They said that Falou AI sometimes struggles to recognize their pronunciation, especially if they use a certain accent. Then there were also those who said that some other features that could improve their pronunciation skills could only be accessed by switching to a premium account.

R1: *Sometimes this app struggles to recognize my pronunciation, especially if I say it with a certain accent.*

R6: *Some of the features are paid, so we have to switch to a premium account to access these features.*

Impact of Falou AI on English pronunciation

Most of the respondents found the app to be of direct benefit to their pronunciation skills. They said that the app provided immediate feedback

when there was a mispronunciation so that they could correct it quickly. In addition, some said the app helped them improve the pronunciation of words that were previously difficult for them to pronounce. Also, the repetitive practice provided in the app helped improve the accuracy of their pronunciation.

R3: *Falou gives immediate feedback on each pronunciation exercise. When I pronounce a sentence, the AI immediately analyzes and gives an assessment of how accurate my pronunciation is.*

R5: *When I pronounce a word incorrectly, the app helps me correct it.*

R8: *If our pronunciation is wrong, then we will be helped and reminded until we pronounce it correctly.*

There were also respondents who said that using this app had a positive impact on their confidence when speaking in English. He said that with this application, he got the encouragement to speak more fluently because he felt more prepared; besides that, he could also know how to pronounce correctly so that it made him more confident when speaking in English.

R10: *With Falou AI, I can know how to pronounce the correct vocabulary in English, so it can increase my confidence when speaking.*

Challenges and issues in the use of Falou AI

Some challenges and issues were encountered in using the app. Respondents said that the AI sometimes struggles to hear or recognize their pronunciation, so they need to repeat it several times. In addition, respondents also said that the accessibility of the features is also limited, needing to switch to the premium version first in order to access all the features freely. Another respondent said that the application lacks other learning features such as grammar, vocabulary, and others.

R4: *When I try to pronounce more difficult words, sometimes the AI cannot immediately recognize my pronunciation correctly.*

R9: *The AI is sometimes very slow to respond to what I have said, so I need to repeat it several times.*

R6: *Some of the features are paid, so we have to switch to a premium account to access these features.*

R2: *There is no feature that provides grammar or vocab learning and others.*

Thus, from both observations and interviews, the results of this study show that Falou AI provides a positive experience and impact on the pronunciation skills of EFL students at the State Islamic University of Mataram. Although there were some problems and challenges encountered, in general, students had a positive perception of Falou AI and felt that the features provided improved their English pronunciation skills.

The results of this study found that the use of Falou AI has a positive impact on improving the pronunciation of EFL students at the State Islamic

University of Mataram. The observation results showed that most of the EFL students were enthusiastic when using this application, and they were able to understand the use of its features easily. They also actively participated in the pronunciation exercises, corrected their mistakes when the AI gave them feedback, and also gave positive responses, such as looking satisfied when they got a good score.

In addition, the interview results also support this finding that most students felt that this application could help them improve their pronunciation when speaking English. As said by R10, this application can help him know how to pronounce correctly, so he can be more confident when speaking in English. However, there are also challenges and problems found when using this application, such as the limited features that are free and also the AI sometimes struggles and takes a long time to respond to their pronunciation, especially if they use a certain accent. Nonetheless, the overall average student perception of Falou AI remains positive.

The results of this study are similar to previous studies that found that AI-based technology is proven to improve language skills as well as students' learning motivation. Research conducted by Abimanto & Mahendro (2023) found that AI-based technology can improve language, including speaking and listening. Similar to the results of this study, students felt that Falou AI can significantly help them improve pronunciation with repeated practice and through direct feedback from the application. This shows consistency in the results that AI technology is proven to be one of the tools or means that facilitate the development of students' language skills independently.

A similar study was conducted by Diantama (2023), who found that AI-based applications can increase student engagement and motivation. As in this study, students said that Falou AI provides a fun and interactive learning experience that encourages them to practice more. As one respondent put it, "This application is like a personal tutor that can be accessed anytime." In addition, a previous study conducted by Karataş et al. (2024), while highlighting how ChatGPT could improve writing skills as well as grammar, found that Falou AI had a more significant impact on speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation. This proves the varied capabilities of AI-based technologies created for specific language learning purposes and specific skills.

There is also research that examines the same application, namely Saragih et al. (2024), who found that the Falou application has a significant impact on students' speaking skills, which is consistent with the results of this study that Falou AI provides a positive experience and improvement in the pronunciation skills of EFL students at State Islamic University of Mataram. Similarly, Senowarsito & Ardini (2023) showed that the ELSA Speak app proved effective in helping improve pronunciation skills and encourage self-directed learning in students, as well as supporting the opinion that AI-based apps can help autonomous skill development. In addition, Haryadi, S & Aprianoto (2020) research revealed that AI-based applications were also able to increase student participation, positive attitudes, and independent learning in

pronunciation teaching, which is also reflected in students' perceptions of Falou AI in this study.

However, this study also has some differences from previous studies that focused more on other skills besides pronunciation. For example, Huang et al. (2023), who highlighted the role of AI in evaluating automatic writing and also smart learning systems for reading and writing, and Abimanto & Mahendro (2023) found significant improvements in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills simultaneously. In contrast to these studies, this study specifically focuses only on students' perceptions of Falou AI in learning pronunciation skills. In addition, while Mohamed & Alian (2023) explored students' attitudes towards chatbots in supporting self-directed learning, this study highlights the effectiveness of Falou AI in providing immediate feedback and also helping to improve pronunciation. Other studies, such as Ariawan et al. (2021) and Widiyastuti et al. (2023), discuss platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom as practical and easy to use in language learning but lack the live pronunciation training feature that Falou AI provides.

This research helps to add and expand the understanding of the role of technology in language learning, especially English. There are many studies that have proven that AI/technology is very useful in language learning. AI is also proven to provide more ideas or alternatives to students to determine appropriate learning experiences (Nurmayasari, 2024). As well as research conducted by Artiniasih & Wedayanthi (2024), found that the use of technology can increase student engagement and also motivate them, especially through visualization of material and also interactive activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that in general, EFL students at the State Islamic University of Mataram have positive responses and experiences towards the use of Falou AI in improving pronunciation. In accordance with the purpose of this study, which is to understand and explore students' perspectives regarding the use of Falou AI in learning pronunciation. They also acknowledged that this application can improve their pronunciation and make them more confident when speaking in English. Although there are some challenges and problems encountered, such as limited access to features, AI that is sometimes difficult to detect pronunciation, or ads that are quite annoying, they still generally have a positive perspective on the use and features provided in the application. In essence, these findings show that Falou AI can be used as a means of learning English for students, especially focusing on pronunciation.

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