ABSTRACT

TANDEM USERS' PERCEPTIONS: THE IMPLICATIONS OF *TANDEM* APPLICATION IN ENGLISH SPEAKING PRACTICE (A CASE STUDY)

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This study is entitled *"Tandem users' perceptions: The implications of tandem application in English speaking practice (a case study)."* The research problems were formulated as follows: (1) How does the use of *tandem* application influence users' in English speaking practice? (2) What are the users' perceptions regarding the advantages of using *tandem* application in speaking practices? (3) What are the challenges experienced by users' while using this application for English speaking practice? This study aims to explore *tandem* users' perceptions of the implications of the *tandem* application in English speaking practice. Specifically, this research analyzes how the use of the *tandem* application influences users' speaking skill, examines users' perceptions of its advantages, and identifies the challenges they experience while using the application. This study employed a descriptive qualitative research. The participants of this study were selected using purposive sampling. The subjects of this study were members of an English-speaking community on the *tandem* application. The participants were ten *tandem* users selected based on specific criteria, namely individuals who had experience using the application for 1-5 years. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted via online platforms such as WhatsApp and the *tandem* application. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study reveal that the use of the *tandem* application has a positive impact on users' English speaking practice. The participants reported influences in flueney, Comprehensibility, interactive communication, and confidence in speaking. In addition, respondents' perceptions of the advantages of this application include: opportunity for real speaking practice, flexible learning environment, supportive learning features, and exposure to diverse speakers and cultures. However, several challenges were also identified: technical error in the application, difficulties in understanding native speakers. In conclusion, the *tandem* application is considered an effective tool for improving English speaking skill and fostering learners' confidence through authentic and interactive communication. Nevertheless, influences in technical features and user management are needed to enhance the overall learning experience.

Keywords: ***Language learning, qualitative study, speaking skill, tandem application, users' perceptions.***

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Language has a very essential role in human life. Especially in establishing communication between one individual and another individual. Language can be interpreted as a system of the sounds and symbols produced by human speech organs. This is what separates humans from other creatures. Finocchiaro (1974), state that language is a system of arbitrary, vocal symbol which permits all people in a given culture, or other people who have learned the system of that culture, to communicate or to interact. In addition, language is also a symbol system that has meaning, as a means of communication and expression of human emotions and a means of embodying human thoughts in everyday life, especially speaking the essence of truth in life.

English is a global language that people use to interact with one another in all parts of their lives, including technology. Many people currently use language learning aids such as software, games, and so on. Language and technology work together to help learners learn languages. Jenifer Jenkins (2017), emphasizes English as a global language, or English as a lingua franca, that is a language used by speakers from various linguistic backgrounds to communicate internationally. Technology is a way of communicating. According to Danah Boyd and Nicole

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Ellison (2007), define social media as an internet based service that allows individuals to create public or semi public profiles, connect with other users, and view a list of connections within the system.

Tandem is an important application developed to improve speaking skill. It improves the learner's conversational abilities by forming a big community of language learners. Several people in the *Tandem* community want to communicate knowledge of their native language and learn the target language from native speakers. The tandem application creates a supportive environment that allows users to practice confidently and learn from mistakes during language exchange. The primary reason for choosing *Tandem* as the topic of this study was its success in supporting language learners in developing their speaking skill, as indicated by its 4.3 Google Play rating (Nushi & Khazaei, 2020).

Apart from the methods and media used by users in learning, there are other things that users must pay attention to, including regarding users' perceptions. The researcher has attempted to define (perceptions). Morgan (1987), defines perception as anything a person experiences through the senses, such as sound, taste, touch, and smell. Furthermore, perception is the process of inputting a message or information into the human brain through human perception, which constantly interacts with the environment.

According to Mangal (2010), an individual's perception is influenced by four determinant elements: physical and social surroundings, physical structure,

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life requirements and aspirations, and prior experiences. "Perception is a highly customized psychological process that assists an organism in organizing and understanding complicated patterns of sensory stimulation to provide the essential meaning to begin its behavioral response."

In the next chapter, the researcher will explain in more detail about what English speaking practice is. Therefore, the author chose examine this title to find out the *tandem* users perceptions: The implications of the *Tandem* application in English speaking practice (A case study).

1.2 Research Problems

Based on the background above the research problems to be analyzed are as follows:

1. How does the use of *Tandem* application influence users' in English speaking practice?
2. What are the users' perceptions regarding the advantages of using *Tandem* application in speaking practices?
3. What are the challenges experienced by users' while using this application for English speaking practice?

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1.3 Research Aims

Based on the statement and the background above, the researcher has considered that the main purpose of this research is as follows:

1. To analyze the influence of the *Tandem* application on users' English speaking practice.
2. To explore users' perceptions regarding the advantages of using *Tandem* application in speaking practices.
3. To identify the challenges experienced by users' while using this application for English speaking practice.

1.4 Benefits

1. For the researcher, as a result it can give the researcher the larger knowledge and information about the implications of *tandem* application in English speaking practice.
2. For the readers, this research can be used as a reference, source, and a suggestion the next research in the research in same topics about the implications of *tandem* application in English speaking practice.

1.5 Definition of Terminologies

1.5.1 User's Perceptions

Perception is the process of recognizing and understanding something. In this study, users' perception means how people interpret and respond to the information

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or experiences they get from their environment or using technology, which then affects their opinions, choices, and actions toward a product or service. According to Joshep Devito (2011:80), "Perception is a process by which we become aware of the many stimuli that affect our senses". According to Yusuf (1991: 108), perception is defined as "the interpretation of observation," stating that perception is an experience of objects, events, or relationships obtained by concluding information and interpreting messages. Perception is now humans respond about what they see, listen and hear, and fell in the environment. Users' perceptions can be defined as the users' way of understanding or interpreting the learning process. So, it can be concluded that users perceptions is the participants the implications of *tandem* application in English speaking practice.

1.5.2 *Tandem* application

The *Tandem* app is a mobile language exchange platform that connects learners with native speakers and fellow language learners to practice languages through text, audio chat, audio rooms and video chats. *Tandem* language learning is a method of language learning based on mutual language exchange between *tandem* partners (ideally each learner is a native speaker in the language the proponent wants to learn. *Tandem* language learning happens wher two learners of different native languages work along to assist each other learning their target language. According to Brammerts (2003), in *tandem* language learning, two people who are learning each other's language work

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together to help one another achieve their desired aim, such as improving their communicative ability in their partner's mother tongue. The researcher of English language education partners in the *tandem* are foreigner friend's native speakers which Indonesian is also one of their target language that they want to learn or they have the same boat to learn English and fellow Indonesian friends have the same boat to learn and practice English.

1.5.3 Speaking skill

Speaking is the oral language skill of conveying intentions, ideas, thoughts, and feelings to others so that they can be understood. Brown in Tiara (2020) claimed that while speaking is a useful skill that can be directly and objectively noticed, the validity and reliability of communication tests are fundamentally threatened by the precision and efficacy of the examinees' listening skill.

1.6 Scope and Limitation

This research focuses on exploring the perceptions of ten *Tandem* users regarding the implications of the *Tandem* application on their English speaking practice. The scope of this study includes individuals who are not necessarily students or involved in formal educational settings but have experience using the *Tandem* app for language exchange or communication. The research specifically examines how the application contributes to improving their speaking in daily conversations. Participants were selected through *Tandem* app, ensuring diversity

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in age, background, and country of origin. The study is limit to user perceptions gather through structure interviews and does not include a deep analysis of the app's technical features or a comparison with other similar applications. Furthermore, the study does not measure language improvement through formal testing but relies solely on self-reported experiences and opinions share by the participants.

1.7 Organization of Writing

This research is divided into five chapters:

Chapter I is Introduction. It includes the background of the study, research problems, research aims, benefits of the research, definition of terminologies, and organization of writing.

Chapter II is Literature Review. It explains the theories used in this research, such as the nature of speaking, *tandem* app, it also presents previous studies related to this research.

Chapter III: Research Methodology. This chapter describes the research method, research participants, research setting, methods data collection, methods of data analysis, and research instrument/research time.

Chapter IV: Research Findings and Disscussions. This chapter describes the influences, the advantages and the challenges.

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Chapter V: Conclusion and suggestion. This chapter describes conclusion and suggestion.

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CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Nature of Speaking

Speaking is one of the important parts of learning a language. Speaking is the process of interaction and also an activity that we always do in our daily life to communicate in society.

2.1.1 Definition of Speaking

Speaking is a way of message in saying ideas, knowledge and feeling to other people. It is the most important method in which the narrator can state themselves with a language.

Furthermore, all people in the world have their speaking skill. when people hear someone speak they pay attention to what the speaker says and they automatically respond to it. Also, speaking is an activity that people always do every time in their daily life to communicate with other people. Nunan (2003) defines speaking as the ability to express opinions. ideas, or thoughts verbally, by producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning so that it can be understood by the listener. Speaking is also seen as a two way interaction between two or more people who exchange information and meaning. The object of speaking also are various; discussion, speech, debate, dialog, and

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conversation. It can be considered as the most important of human tools for social control.

So, it can be conclude that speaking is a fundamental skill in human communication that allows individuals to express their opinions, ideas, and thoughts verbally. Speaking takes place in various forms, such as discussions, speeches, debates, dialogues, and conversations, which demonstrate the importance of two-way interaction in conveying and receiving information. Therefore, speaking skill not only play a role in everyday life, but also serve as an important tool in social control and interpersonal relationships.

2.1.2 Function of Speaking

Nowdays, speaking is considered one of the most important skills in human life. In many aspects of daily activities, speaking plays a crucial role because people use it to communicate, share ideas, thoughts, and feelings with others. According to Brown and Yule in Richards (2008), the functions are presented below.

1. Speaking as Interaction

As quoted in Richards (2008: p.22-27), "speaking as interaction refers to what we normally mean by 'conversation' and describes that serves a primarily social function". When people meet, they will exchange greetings and start to have a small conversation with some topics to build a comfortable zone; to be friendly and to maintain the relationship.

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The highlighting principles of speaking as interaction can be outlined as follows:

a) Has a fundamentally social capacity
b) Reflects part relationship
c) Reflects speaker's personality
d) May be formal or easygoing
e) Uses conversational traditions
f) Reflects degrees of good manners
g) Employs numerous non-specific words
h) Uses conversational register
i) Is mutually built

2. Speaking as Transaction

Speaking as transaction refers to circumstances where the attention is on what is says or done. The message and making interlocutor understand clearly and accurately is the main focus, as opposed to the members and how they cooperate socially with each other (Richard, 2008: p.26). The principle of speaking as transaction as follows:

a) It has a principal information center.
b) The fundamental spotlight is on the message and not the members.
c) Participants use communication techniques to make themselves understood.

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d) There might be visit inquiries, repetition, and comprehension checks, as in the case from the former classroom lesson.

e) There might be negotiation and digression.

f) Linguistic accuracy is not generally imperative.

3. Speaking as Performance

The third kind of talk that can helpfully be recognized has been called speaking as performance. This alludes to open talk, that is, talk that transmits data before a crowd of people, for example, classroom introductions, open declarations, and discourses. For example, opening of a fall welcome speech that is given by a college president (Richard, 2008: p.27). Speaking as performance has a tendency to be as monolog instead of exchange, regularly takes after an understandable configuration, for example a welcoming speech, and is closer to written language than conversational language. It is frequently assessed by its effectiveness or effect on the audience, something that is probably not going to occur with speaking as interaction or transaction.

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2.2 *Tandem* application

2.2.1 Definition of *Tandem* application



PICTURE 1. THE *TANDEM* APPLICATION LOGO

Tandem is a language learning application designed to facilitate direct communication between users and native speakers through text, voice chat audio, and video call features. Richards (2015) in his book The Changing Face of Language Learning states that language learning platforms based on direct interaction with native speakers, such as *Tandem* app, are a significant innovation in language learning. Richards emphasizes that the communicative approach through real conversations is more effective than traditional methods because users not only learn language structures but also contextual aspects such as culture, intonation, and informal language usage. In addition, Richards highlights the role of technology in expanding user access to interact with native speakers, which was previously one of the main obstacles in foreign language learning.

This application provides a conversation-based practice environment that encourages users to improve their fluency and communication skills

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through direct language exchange. Research shows that conversation practice, especially with native speakers, is one of the most effective methods for improving speaking and verbal communication skills (Li & Zhang, 2023). Thus, *Tandem* app can be considered a relevant platform for individuals who want to develop public speaking skill and communication competencies in the context of foreign language learning.

2.2.2 Concept of the *Tandem* App

The Tandem application is based on the principle of Tandem language learning, which is a method of language learning through language exchange with native speakers without the need for formal teaching experience. Brammerts (2003) in his work Autonomous Language Learning in Tandem explains that this approach creates a reciprocal learning space, where participants exchange languages and learn without a teacher student hierarchy. This model emphasizes independent learning and intrinsic motivation through natural conversation, which allows for the simultaneous reinforcement of linguistic aspects and cultural understanding. Brammerts also emphasizes that the success of this approach is determined by equal participation and structural support, which is reflected in *Tandem* features such as Language Clubs and Language Parties.

Tandem app is a language learning platform that combines individual language exchange practice with group-based community activities. Through

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features such as 1-on-1 interaction, Language Parties, and Language Clubs, this app provides a flexible and collaborative learning experience. With the support of *Tandem* Fundazioa, traditional language learning approaches have been successfully integrated with modern technology, making *Tandem* an inclusive platform that supports language learning and cultural exchange on a global scale.

2.2.3 Features in the *tandem* application

Following are some of the main features of the *Tandem* application along with explanations:

1. Language Partner Search: This feature allows users to search for language learning partners based on their preferences, such as the language they want to learn, proficiency level, and specific interests.



PICTURE 2. Language Partner Search

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2. Text: Users can communicate with language partners via in-app text. This allows them to practice writing the language being studied.



PICTURE 3. Text

3. Voice Chat: Is a feature or service that allows two people to talk directly via voice using an internet network.



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PICTURE 4. Voice Chat

4. Video Call: The video call feature allows users to interact directly with language partners. This is very useful for practicing speaking and listening insituations similar to real conversations.



PICTURE 5. Video Call

5. Language Correction: Users can ask for help from a language partner to correct errors in grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary. It helps in improving language proficiency effectively.



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PICTURE 6. Language Correction

6. Quizzes and Games: *Tandem* app provides a variety of quizzes and language games to help users deepen their understanding of grammar, vocabulary, and culture.



PICTURE 7. Quizzes and Games

7. Study Materials: This app offers access to study materials such as articles, videos, and audio in the language being studied. It helps users to expand their vocabulary and understanding of related cultures.

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PICTURE 8. Study Materials

8. Party room/audio room: A feature that researcher think is very good for improving English speaking because it indirectly talks with native speakers and also fellow people who want to learn English. In this feature there are two sections, namely the speaker section and the listener section. When you want to train or talk to people in the community, you can raise your hand using the features provided by the application.



PICTURE 9. Party Room/audio room

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9. Points and Achievements System: Tandem app has a points and achievements system that motivates users to be active in learning the language and participating in the community. Points are awarded for specific activities such as providing language corrections or completing quizzes.



PICTURE 10. Points and Achievements

2.2.4 The purpose of Using *Tandem* application

Speaking fluency is an essential component of language learning, especially for learners studying a foreign language. It shows how well learners can communicate their ideas, thoughts, and naturally in actual communication. To achieve this, continues practice is essential, as it helps learners build confidence and improve their ability to communicate effectively and efficiently. However, many language learners often face challenges in finding suitable speaking partners or real contexts to practice the target language. In this regard, the *tandem* application offers an effective solution by providing opportunities for learners to interact directly with native speakers.

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The tandem application is designed to support language learners in developing their speaking skills through direct communication with native and proficient speakers from different parts of the world. *Tandem* provides a digital environment that supports real-time communication, enabling learners to exchange languages and practice speaking in a natural context. Through text, audio, and video chat features, users can actively engage in conversations that reflect authentic communication situations. According to Lai, Hu, and Lyu (2018), language exchange platforms such as *Tandem* allow learners to practice in authentic and interactive settings, helping them enhance fluency, accuracy, and cultural understanding.

2.2.5 The influences of using *Tandem* app

Influence is the ability to affect of change the opinions, behavior, or decisions of others. According to Surakhmad (2012) influence is a force that arises from something or someone and is also an internal phenomenon that can bring about changes that shape beliefs or attitudes. Some of the influences of using *tandem* application include:

2.2.5.1 Fluency can be understood as the ability to speak smoothly, naturally, and continuously with minimal pauses or hesitation. Hughes (2003) states that fluency involves speaking at a normal rate with minimal hesitation, repetition, or self-correction that may interrupt communication. In language learning, fluency develops through

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frequent opportunities to practice speaking in meaningful contexts. The tandem application provides opportunities for learners to participate in authentic conversations with language partners. Through regular interaction, learners can improve their ability to express ideas spontaneously, maintain conversations, and reduce hesitation while speaking. Therefore, the use of the tandem application may contribute to the development of learners' fluency in speaking English.

2.2.5.2 Comprehensibility can be understood as how easily a listener understands the message delivered by a speaker. According to Isaacs and Trofimovich (2012), comprehensibility is the degree of ease with which a listener understands a speaker's intended message. Regular interaction through the tandem application encourages learners to express their ideas clearly and adjust their language according to the listener's responses. As a result, learners may develop greater comprehensibility because they become more capable of delivering messages in a clear and understandable manner. Therefore, the use of the tandem application is expected to have a positive influence on learners' comprehensibility in speaking English.

2.2.5.3 Interactive communicative communication is the ability to engage effectively in spoken interaction by initiating, maintaining, and responding appropriately during conversations. Luoma (2004) explains that interactive communication involves managing

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conversations, responding to interlocutors, and maintaining meaningful interaction. The use of the tandem application may positively influence learners' interactive communication skill. Through continuous interaction in authentic communicative contexts, learners can become more confidence and effective in managing conversations and responding appropriately to their communication partners.

2.2.5.4 Confidence: By providing a supportive learning environment, the app helps users reduce their fear of making mistakes during communication. According to Brown (2007), self-confidence plays an important role in successful language learning because learners who believe in their abilities tend to participate more actively in communication activities. The use of the tandem application may positively influence learners' confidence by providing frequent opportunities for authentic communication, reducing speaking anxiety, and encouraging active participation in language use.

2.2.6 The advantages of *Tandem* app

According to Brammerts (2003: 27-36), in *tandem* learning, "two people who are learning each other's language work together to help one another achieve their desired aims".

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2.2.6.1 Opportunity for real speaking practice

One of the main advatages of using the tandem application in speaking practices is the opportunity for real speaking practice. This aspect refers to the opportunity for learners to practice speaking English directly with other people in authentic communication situations. Through real speaking practice, learners can use English in meaningful interaction rather than only focusing on grammar, vocabulary, or language theory in classroom settings. Young and West (2018) stated that classroom instruction often provides limited opportunities for quality speaking practice. Therefore, speaking practice outside the classroom, particularly through online communication platforms, offers valuable opportunities for learners to improve their speaking abilities through authentic interaction.

2.2.6.2 Flexible learning environment

Another advatage of using the tandem application for speaking practice is its flexible learning environment. This aspect refers to the flexibility offered by the application, which allows learners to practice speaking anytime and anywhere according to their own schedules, needs, and learning preferences. Unlike traditional classroom learning, which is limited by time and place, flexible learning enables learners to access speaking practice in a more convenient and adaptable way. According to Khan (2005) explains that flexible learning environments supported by

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technology provide opportunities for learners to access educational resources and learning activities anytime and anywhere.

2.2.6.3 Supportive Learning Features

Another advantage of using the tandem application in speaking practices is the availability of supportive learning features. This aspect refers to the various features provided by the application that facilitate learners in practicing speaking more effectively, such as text chats, voice messages, audio rooms, video calls, party rooms, and correction tools. These features help learners in engage in meaningful communication and improve their speaking practice in interactice ways. Similarly, Chapelle (2001) explains that technology in language learning can provide effective support for language acquisition by offering interactive features that encourage communication, practice, and feedback. She emphasizes that technological tools can facilitate more active participation in language learning, particularly in communicative skill development such as speaking.

2.2.6.4 exposure to diverse speakers and cultures

This aspect refers to learners' opportunities to communicate with people from different countries, cultural backgrounds, accents, and communication styles through the application. Such exposure helps learners improve their speaking skills while also developing

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intercultural awareness and broader communication understanding. Kramsch (1998) states that language and culture are inseparable because language learning involves understanding how people from different cultural backgrounds use language in social interaction. Exposure to diverse speakers and cultural enables learners to develop broader communicative understanding and cultural awareness.

2.2.7 The challenges of using *Tandem* app

Users may also encounter several challenges during the learning process. Kahn et al. (1964) explain that conflict and role ambiguity are sources of organizational stress that alter interaction patterns. In the context of language exchange applications such as *tandem*, this can be interpreted to mean that "challenges" act as obtacles that affect user interactions and motivate the search for solutions and the influences of communication skill. Several common challenges is using the tandem app are discussed below.

2.2.7.1 Technical error refers to technology related problems that may disturb the learning process. According to Hockly (2013), technological limitations such as poor internet connectivity and software malfunctions can affect the quality of online language learning. These challenges may limit learners' participation in communication activities and reduce the overall quality of learning.

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2.2.7.2 Comprehension difficulties refer to challenges in understanding spoken or written communication. According to Isaacs and Trofimovich (2012), successful communication depends on the listener's ability to understand the speaker's intended meaning. Comprehension difficulties may hinder effective interaction. However, overcoming these difficulties can also contribute to learners' development of listening and communication skills.

2.3 Previous Study

In this thesis entitled "*Tandem* users' perceptions: The implications of *Tandem* application in English speaking practice (A case study)," the prospective researcher did not find any similar titles, but there were some titles with research references focusing on issues similar to this study. Several studies described by the prospective researcher can be used as references for comparison, namely:

1. Bakar (2013) conducted a study entitled "Students' perception on the effectiveness of the *Tandem* language exchange application in developing their speaking skills."
2. Tiara A.S (2020) conducted a study entitled "Students' perception on the effectiveness of Tandem: Language exchange application to develop students' speaking skills."

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3. Anderson D.F. (2024) conducted a study titled "Perceptions Kebumen Tourism Ambassadors of the Use of Digital Media (*Tandem* Application) as a Medium to Enhance Communication Skills."

This study focuses on the general users' perceptions not limited to students or professionals regarding the implications of the *Tandem* application in English speaking practice. The study explores how users perceive *Tandem's* advantages, challenges, and its overall impact on their English speaking improvement. While Bakar (2013) and Tiara (2020) focused on students' perception of the effectiveness of the *Tandem* language exchange application in improving fluency and pronunciation. The study emphasized how students benefit from communicating directly with native speakers in academic learning contexts. In addition, Anderson (2024) focused on the perceptions of Kebumen Tourism Ambassadors about the use of digital media (*Tandem* app) to enhance public speaking and professional communication.

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