

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL) IN EFL CLASS: AN OVERVIEW OF ALTISSIA USAGE

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Abstract

Previous research has revealed that MALL is becoming widely used since it can increase students' knowledge and skills in English language learning. This study investigated students' perceptions of MALL, particularly Altissia, in EFL class. Most students did not use or access Altissia during the learning process was becoming one of the problems that led to the low ability in students' English skills. Thirty students answered a questionnaire survey after experiencing Altissia in their learning activity. The findings revealed that the student's agreement with the positive perceptions was shown in the questionnaire prevailed over their disagreement or neutral responses. Altissia contributed a great impact on their listening skills and vocabulary knowledge. Altissia also supported them to enhance their motivation and interest to keep learning English. Students felt excited about learning new levels in different topics on Altissia. Students could practice communicating their English skills more often after learning with Altissia. On the other hand, the findings also indicated that the students did not get any notification about the study time and did not experience writing activity on Altissia. Moreover, Altissia can be an alternative to learning media that can improve students' skills in their EFL classes.

Keywords: Perception, MALL, EFL, Altissia

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INTRODUCTION

Mobile devices, portable devices, and internet access, such as mobile applications in smartphones or computers, have been a part of human life modernization. All of those devices are used in every human life aspect, for example, in learning and teaching activities.¹

¹ Desika Rinanda, Suparno, and Sri Samiati Tarjana, 'ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies on Humanities', *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2.4 (2019), 499–514 <<http://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/jish>>.

English teaching and learning as a foreign language have its challenges; one of them is the lack of opportunity to practice English skills outside the classroom, and the problems even arise at the university level. Students are looking for ways to motivate themselves to be more independent in practicing English outside the classroom. Mobile applications are considered a solution to answer these challenges.².

The use of this technology is changing to be in line with the strategic goals of education, such as improving student learning outcomes, supporting different learning needs, and also being able to reach out to other people who do not have the opportunity to learn English.³.

The use of mobile applications also contributes to educational institutions, including the achievement of distance learning goals. Various media can also be used to support the implementation of online learning. For example, virtual classes can use Google Classroom, Edmodo, and Schoology services and instant messaging applications such as WhatsApp. Learning using mobile applications connects students with their learning resources (databases, experts/instructors, libraries) that are physically separated or even far apart but can communicate, interact or collaborate (directly/synchronously and indirectly/asynchronously)⁴.

In recent quasi-experimental research, Rachels and Rockinson-Szapkiw explored primary school students learning Spanish through face-to-face teaching or Duolingo. The performance of the two groups on grammar and vocabulary tests was not significantly different after 40 minutes of exposure per week for 12 weeks, leading Rachels and Rockinson-Szapkiw to argue that Duolingo may be "an affordable, cost-effective alternative" for L2 learning.⁵.

It was also found in Croatian learners. Even if students may not always appreciate the significance of vocabulary acquisition, it is linked to every language skill, including speaking and writing, which Croatian learners find the most challenging in their studies.⁶.

A literature survey led us to seek a learning and teaching tool that improves recollection by allowing students to make mistakes and test them frequently. Memrise, a web-based program with a mobile app form-learning, was picked as the platform that would be most useful in the classroom.

² Pramesti and Ani Susanti, 'Students' Perception of the Use of Mobile Application Duolingo for Learning English', *International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research*, 9.1 (2020), 1800–1804.

³ Agnes Kukulska-Hulme, 'Will Mobile Learning Change Language Learning?', *ReCALL*, 21.2 (2009), 157–65 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344009000202>>.

⁴ Ali Sadikin and Afreni Hamidah, 'Pembelajaran Daring Di Tengah Wabah Covid-19', *Biodik*, 6.2 (2020), 109–19 <<https://doi.org/10.22437/bio.v6i2.9759>>.

⁵ Rachels, J. R. & Rockinson-Szapkiw, A. J. (2018) The effects of a mobile gamification app on elementary students' Spanish achievement and self-efficacy. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 31(1–2): 72–89 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2017.1382536>>.

⁶ M. Janjić, S. Librenjak, K. Kocijan. 'Croatian Students' Attitudes towards Technology Usage in Teaching Asian languages - a Field Research'. Proceedings of the 39th International Convention MIPRO, Rijeka (2016), 1051-1055.

The feasibility of language learning through mobile applications has been studied in much language literature. The research was seen from the mobility, practicality, and flexibility in providing rich learning resources and good context authenticity through an internet connection. This greatest discovery has been shown to significantly help language learners to learn English by enabling them to have more fun and effective learning activities. Furthermore, the mobile application also provides various benefits that can facilitate the integrated mastery of four skills in English. Students can be given speaking exercises that also involve listening activities, writing exercises that require collaboration, reading exercises that provide various perspectives, and other exercises.⁷

Many mobile applications have been developed to support learning English, including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and learning vocabulary and grammar. Although these applications, usually designed with sounds, images, and other interactions, are certainly attractive to students, the emphasis on language learning should not be ignored.⁸ While paid apps offer more comprehensive features, free apps can also serve as invaluable learning tools, especially if they are chosen very well on criteria that lead to meaningful language learning such as easy to use, engaging, culturally appropriate, relevant to student needs, enabling share and collaborate, provide feedback, and develop thinking skills.

Several mobile applications are available for language learners and can be accessed using internet access via smartphones or computers. One of those mobile applications is Altissia. Altissia is a paid and subscription mobile learning application originating from Belgium. Altissia provides language learning not only English as a learning medium that contains explanations and exercises. It provides language learning focusing on speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills. This mobile app presents lessons on different modules like basic English, food, daily life, common phrases, etc. The user must register for a subscription and then access Altissia using the username and password that has been created. For the first time, students will be directed to choose their level of English proficiency. Each learning topic will be explained interactively, and students will be directed to do the exercises. For example, they are matching words, listening to words, saying words, and selecting the missing word in multiple-choice options. Every time a user makes a mistake, an immediate response is given in the form of the correct answer. Incorrectly answered questions are repeated several times until the user answers them correctly. The more errors the user makes, the longer the session lasts. Users can only unlock the next module or advance to the next level after completing the previous module.

Altissia is used by all students at the University of Pembangunan Panca Budi who are non-English learners. Altissia as a learning medium is used by students starting from the first semester. During one semester of lectures, students will access Altissia. Students can also access Altissia anywhere and anytime. Students can access Altissia at

⁷ Tuti Hidayati and Sari Diana, 'Students' Motivation to Learn English Using Mobile Applications: The Case of Duolingo and Hello English', *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 6.2 (2019), 189–213 <<https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v6i2.1233>>.

⁸ Hui Guo, 'Analyzing and Evaluating Current Mobile Applications for Learning English Speaking', *British Council ELT Master's Dissertation Awards: Commendation*, (2014), 2–92 <https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/filefield_paths/analysing_and_evaluating_current_mobile_applications_v2.pdf>.

<https://learn.altissia.org/platform/#/login>. Apart from getting directions and explanations about English from the lecturers, students can do independent learning from Altissia, which is very interactive.

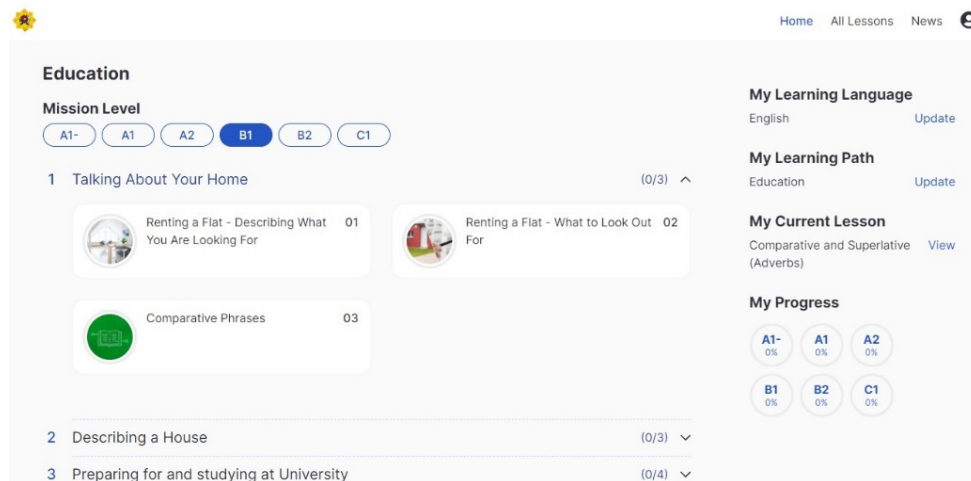


Figure 1. The Appearance of Altissia

Altissia is a fun learning medium for students to practice and empower existing learning resources to improve their English skills outside the classroom. However, the fact in the field, there were around 79% of students accessed Altissia in a short time or even never accessed Altissia at all. Studying using Altissia is an obligation and a requirement to pass English courses.

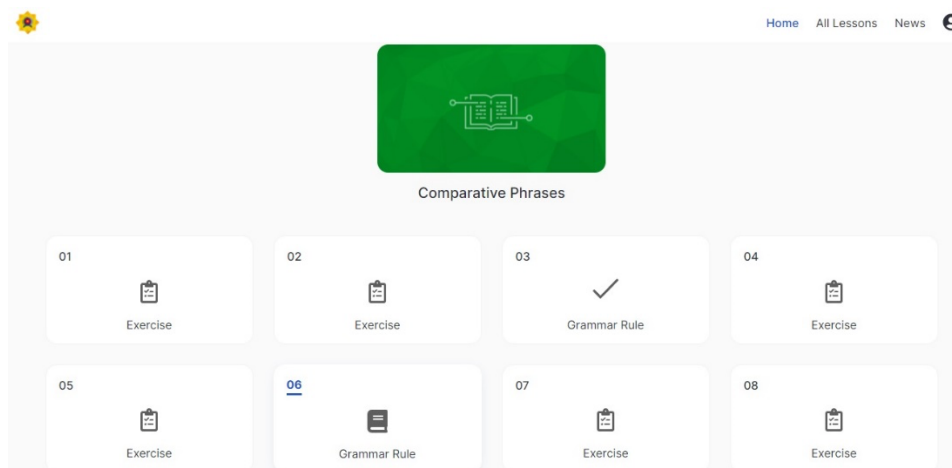


Figure 2. The Exercises of Altissia

Around 79% of students do not use or access Altissia during the learning process is one of the problems that lead to the low ability in students' English skills. This problem is really interesting to solve related to the students' perception of learning English on Altissia since English is a foreign language for them. Perception can be defined as seeing, hearing, or understanding something. Therefore, perception is a personal judgment or, in other words, how someone sees and understands something in a certain way. Positive perceptions come from individual satisfaction about certain objects that are the source of their perceptions, namely individual knowledge and individual experiences of the perceived object. Otherwise, the negative perception comes from the individual's

dissatisfaction with the particular object that is the source of their perception. Lastly, this perception can be used as input and improvement the English learning process inside and outside the classroom.

Besides Altissia, there is also another MALL that was known as online English learning media, such as Duolingo and Memrise. All of them have their characteristics. Duolingo claims itself as a free, science-based language learning platform. Although Duolingo is accessible online to any web-enabled device at <https://www.duolingo.com/>, its most significant benefit is worldwide smartphone access. The Duolingo app may be downloaded and installed on iOS, Android, and Windows mobile devices. Learner progress may be synchronized across platforms and devices. The program also has features for engaging with the program as well as with other language learners⁹.

Memrise is a free vocabulary learning website with a web application and an Android and iPhone app. It allows you to create courses with the necessary vocabulary in practically any language or use any current ones for individual learning. Its primary characteristics include easy accessibility, the ability to learn just on the move at any time and location, the use of spaced repetition algorithms for greater memory, knowledge assessment techniques, and gamification components such as scoreboards. This section attempts to correlate the findings of learning techniques research with the functions of Memrise, demonstrating that it is a feasible alternative to utilize in a classroom context, rather than only individual and goal-less learning¹⁰.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study was descriptive quantitative research. Descriptive designs are non-experimental because they do not require intervention or treatment. They generally aim to provide information about key parameters without testing hypotheses.¹¹ This study aimed to investigate students' perception of the usage of Altissia as a Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in their language learning. The participants were first-year students at the University of Pembangunan Panca Budi, Medan, Indonesia. The participants ranged from 18 to 22 years of age and learned the same English topics and materials. All the participants had the same lecturer who taught English by using Altissia in the class. The English instruction course was a teacher-centered course, in which the teacher mostly lectured. In this course, the teacher provided instructions about using Altissia as their mobile application and had students use this application during and after class to improve their English skills.

⁹ Shawn Loewen and others, 'Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: A Duolingo Case Study', *ReCALL*, 2019, 1–19 <<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344019000065>>.

¹⁰ Sara Librenjak, Marijana Janjić, and Kristina Kocijan, 'Sustainable Vocabulary Acquisition in Japanese Classroom with the Help of Memrise', *International Academic Conference on Global Education, Teaching and Learning*, 6.2 (2016), 54–61.

¹¹ Patricia M. Sheean and others, 'Publishing Nutrition Research: A Review of Multivariate Techniques-Part 1', *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 111.1 (2011), 103–10 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2010.10.010>>.

An adapted questionnaire was employed as a measuring data instrument. The questionnaire was found to be reliable ($p= 0.78$)¹². The participants were asked to answer all items in the questionnaire honestly and give their perceptions about the usage of Altissia as a learning media in learning English. Thirty participants responded to it. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The questionnaire consisted of 30 statements and a five-item scale with 1 for "strongly disagree", 2 for "disagree", 3 for "neutral", 4 for "agree", and 5 for "strongly agree".

Research Procedure

Altissia was used by students of the Computer System study program in their first year of study at the Faculty of Science and Technology as a media to support learning English. Altissia was used during and after the English classes. All the classes lasted 90 minutes per week, were held from the end of October to December 2021, and focused on developing all English skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All 30 students used Altissia to learn the materials in an online course/class. Students' English level in Altissia was limited between A2 and B1 levels. At the end of the learning session, the students were asked to fill out the questionnaire related to their perception of learning English with Altissia.

The content of Altissia was purposed to practice and gain new words and phrases, which were proved to be students' main weaknesses when learning English, based on their needs analysis carried out at the pre-test at the beginning of the semester. Altissia was developed for the Android, iOS, and website operating systems. There are various lessons on vocabulary, grammar focus, and conversations. The students must learn the explanation of grammar, practice the conversations and answer the exercises. Lastly, they can check their answers and correct their wrong answers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To enlighten deeper points in students' perceptions, the researchers implemented the questionnaire after using Altissia as the scaffolding tool for several months. The findings of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1 below. Thirty students filled it in. Most of the students used smartphones to access Altissia, but some used computers to access it. Their answers to the statements in the questionnaire were provided in percentages.

Table 1. The Students' Perception of Altissia in EFL Class

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Percentage (%)							
1	I believe using Altissia helped me improve my listening skills.	0	0	3.33	33.33	63.33	100

¹² Ecem Ekinci and Mithat Ekinci, 'Perceptions of EFL Learners about Using Mobile Applications for English Language Learning : A Case Study International Journal of Language Academy EFL Learners' Perceptions about Using Mobile Applications for English Language Learning : A Case Study 1', September 2017.

2	I believe using Altissia helped me improve my speaking skills.	0	33.33	6.67	36.67	23.33	100
3	I believe using Altissia helped me improve my reading skills.	0	10	6.67	40	43.33	100
4	I believe using Altissia helped me improve my writing skills.	0	33.33	10	23.33	33.33	100
5	I believe using Altissia helped me develop my vocabulary knowledge.	0	0	3.33	30	66.67	100
6	I believe using Altissia helped me revise grammatical structures easily.	6.67	16.67	6.67	33.33	36.67	100
7	I find it is interesting to use Altissia to learn English.	0	3.333	0	73.33	23.33	100
8	I have sometimes forgotten to use Altissia during the lesson.	33.33	40	6.67	10	10	100
9	Altissia increased my motivation to learn English.	0	6.67	0	33.33	60	100
10	I found myself willing to use Altissia to improve my English.	0	6.67	0	76.67	16.67	100
11	Altissia contributed greatly to my knowledge of English grammar.	0	0	6.67	26.67	66.67	100
12	Altissia contributed greatly to my knowledge of English vocabulary.	0	0	6.67	30	63.33	100
13	Altissia contributed greatly to my ability to listen in English.	0	6.67	20	33.33	40	100
14	Altissia contributed greatly to my ability to speak English.	6.67	6.67	3.33	40	43.33	100
15	I will continue to use Altissia after the lesson.	0	0	6.67	46.67	46.67	100
16	I would recommend using Altissia to other EFL learners.	0	3.333	6.67	46.67	43.33	100
17	I found it difficult to use Altissia.	43.33	46.67	3.33	6.67	0	100

18	I found it difficult to remember using Altissia.	40	36.67	6.67	10	6.67	100
19	Using Altissia to learn English was boring for me.	66.67	20	6.67	6.67	0	100
20	While using Altissia, I came across familiar words and phrases.	0	16.67	16.7	33.33	33.33	100
21	While using Altissia, I learn unfamiliar words and phrases.	26.67	26.67	6.67	20	20	100
22	I felt good when I could upgrade my level on Altissia.	0	0	6.67	33.33	60	100
23	I felt bad when I could not upgrade my level on Altissia.	0	6.67	6.67	40	46.67	100
24	I always wanted to continue using Altissia even though I failed in some stages.	0	3.333	6.67	33.33	56.67	100
25	I always wanted to quit using Altissia when I failed in some stages.	60	30	3.33	6.67	0	100
26	I found myself using Altissia unconsciously.	40	43.33	6.67	6.67	3.33	100
27	I recommended my friends use Altissia, which I was following.	0	0	10	33.33	56.67	100
28	Thanks to Altissia, I could do more practice in English.	0	0	6.67	26.67	66.67	100
29	Thanks to Altissia, I meet people who are native speakers of English.	0	40	6.67	36.67	16.67	100
30	Thanks to Altissia, I communicate in English more than I usually do.	0	0	6.67	20	73.33	100

It was adapted from: Ekinci, Ecem & Ekinci, Mithat, 'Perceptions of EFL Learners about Using Mobile Applications for English Language Learning: A Case Study, (2017), pp. 13-14.

Note. SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; N: Neutral; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree.

'Agree' and 'strongly agree' responses were interpreted as students' positively value of the learning process proposed in the item questionnaire. The 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' responses were interpreted as students' negatively values of the learning process. Table 1 illustrates the findings of the questionnaire.

Examining Table 1, some key points showed the highest percentage of participants' perceptions about using Altissia in their EFL class. The percentage of the questionnaire items revealed that item 1 was about the help of Altissia to improve students' listening skills (63.3%). Item 5 was about the support of Altissia to develop students' vocabulary knowledge (66.7%). Item 7 was about the students' interest to use Altissia in language learning (73%). Item 9 was about the students' motivation increased when they learnt with Altissia in language learning (60%). Item 10 was about students' willingness to use Altissia to improve their English skills (77%). Item 11 was about students' knowledge of English grammar, which was contributed by Altissia (66.7%). Item 12 was about students' knowledge of English vocabulary, which was contributed by Altissia (63.3%). Item 19 was about students' excitement in learning English with Altissia (66.7%). Item 22 was about students' enjoyment to upgrade their level in Altissia (60%). Item 24 was about students' continuity in to use of Altissia (56.7%). Item 25 was about students' intention to keep using Altissia even if they failed some stages (60%). Item 27 was students' recommendation to use Altissia with other friends (56.7%). Item 28 was that students could practise more in English through Altissia (66.7%). Lastly, item 30 was that students could communicate in English more than they used to (73.3%).

The interpretation of the research results showed that fourteen statements were found to be positive perceptions since more than 50% of the responses were rated as 'agree' or strongly agree'. From those statements, four key points could be discussed related to students' perceptions of to use of Altissia in EFL class.

Firstly, it was obvious that students appreciated the role of Altissia in helping them improve their listening skills and develop their vocabulary knowledge (items 1 and 5). Learning by using Altissia gave them meaningful experience in listening to native speaker records. They could also imitate what they were listening to learn about improving their accent and pronunciation as the native speakers did. They also gained more vocabulary since they could find the meaning of vocabulary directly by clicking the words they were looking for. They also could know and use various native words that could help them enrich their vocabularies.

This finding was in line with the studies done by Alhadiah, who found that the students perceived MALL as a useful program that was easy to use, and they reported the intention to use it in the future. It is highly recommended that the use of MALL-based tools for vocabulary learning for their usefulness inside and outside the classroom.¹³¹⁴.

Secondly, the finding showed that students gained much more improvement in their motivation, interest, willingness and the contribution of Altissia to their EFL class (items 5, 7, 9-12, and 19). They felt interesting to use Altissia as their learning media. They were also motivated to learn and practice English better. Altissia contributed to gaining and increasing their knowledge in vocabulary and grammar. For every level or topic in Altissia, there is a grammar note/explanation related to the topics learnt. After understanding the grammar explanation, the students will be given exercises to test their

¹³ Abdullah Alhadiah, 'EFL Learners ' Experience of a MALL-Based Vocabulary Learning Tool', 10.2 (2020), 283–91.

¹⁴ Blanka Klimova and Petra Polakova, 'Students' Perceptions of an EFL Vocabulary Learning Mobile Application', (2018), 1-8 < doi:10.3390/educsci10020037>.

knowledge and skill in using grammar in sentences. They also can check whether their answers are correct or incorrect. Then, they can correct it to get the highest score.

This finding was in line with Cukalevska and Johansson, who stated it was essential that MALL was not simply used as an educational or communicative tool, but it could be used to help students collaborate on specific exercises or help individuals do grammar exercises and tests with a formative purpose.¹⁵

Thirdly, the finding revealed that students showed enjoyment and continuity to use Altissia. They found some difficulty in the exercises, but they kept doing and going on accessing Altissia. If they could answer the questions and continue to the next level, they found it a happy and good feeling to learn with Altissia. They did not want to quit if they failed in some topics. Even they intended to recommend Altissia to other friends so that they could learn together on Altissia. As a result, it was in line with research on tenth grades students in Buleleng regency who had a positive perception of MALL in learning English.¹⁶

Lastly, the finding showed that students did more practice communicating in English after learning with Altissia. They could practice their listening and speaking skills more often anytime and anywhere. They could also practise communicating in English with friends and their lecturer confidently. MALL could improve students' speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. The more the students practise their speaking skills through MALL, the better their speaking skills.¹⁷

CONCLUSION

Many researchers agree that MALL can impact meaningful and successful language learning for students. Everyone in anywhere and anytime can use it. This study examined the students' perception of MALL, particularly Altissia. The result revealed that the students showed a positive thought and feeling when they learnt English with Altissia. They agreed that Altissia is one of medias that can be used in EFL class. Altissia contributes a great impact on students' listening skills and vocabulary knowledge. Students feel much more motivated and interested to learn using Altissia on their own. Students show excitement and a good feeling in learning English skills on Altissia. Students intend to keep using Altissia after class. Students can practice their listening and speaking skills and feel confident since they use Altissia more often.

Some negative perceptions were also found in the research findings. Students state that sometimes they forget to learn using Altissia since there is no notification from Altissia to remind them about the learning schedule/time. Students also find it difficult to

¹⁵ Marija Cukalevska, 'Independent Project with Specialization in English The Impact of MALL on English Grammar Learning', (2020), 1-24.

¹⁶ P.A. Indiana, et al., 'Tenth Grade Students' Perception toward Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Learning English in Buleleng Regency in Academic Year 2017/2018', (2018), 1-13.

¹⁷ Darmawati, 'Improving Speaking Skill Through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)', 1.1 (2018), 24-30, <<http://openjournal.unpam.ac.id/index.php/JTSI>>.

improve their writing skills because they just type short answers in most of the exercises given, and there are no writing composition exercises.

A positive perception of Altissia impacted students' motivation and confidence in learning English. The positive perception allowed students to improve their listening and speaking skills. They also believed that by learning English with Altissia, their vocabulary knowledge could be increased. However, more research should be done on students' perceptions toward Altissia in EFL class to discover other aspects that might improve the English teaching and learning process.

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