

Harnessing ELSA for enhanced English language learning: An educator's guide

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Summary: Technological advancements in the 21st century such as the app ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) have transformed language learning. ELSA leverages AI to enhance English proficiency by offering feedback on pronunciation, fluency, and grammar. Aligned with global English test standards, ELSA is a practical self-assessment tool and augments traditional classroom teaching methods. Research endorses ELSA's effectiveness, recommending it for educators aiming to improve students' English language skills.

Keywords: ELSA, AI, language learning, pronunciation

Introduction

The rapid evolution of technology in the 21st century has resulted in an explosion of digital tools for language learning. Among these tools, the ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) app stands out as a particularly effective solution for improving English language speaking skills, pronunciation, and fluency. As an English Language Learner, I used the ELSA app for three months and identified improvements in my pronunciation and speaking skills, with my proficiency level improving from intermediate to advanced.

ELSA has two versions: the ELSA app and ELSA speech analyzer. ELSA app is like a personal language coach to identify the pronunciation errors made by English learners. The ELSA tools offer personalized learning paths and instant feedback. For instance, isolated words and phonemes are tested (Figure 1). ELSA app provides feedback on pronunciation of each phoneme.

The ELSA score is likely calculated based on a proprietary algorithm that takes into account the various aspects of speech that the app analyzes:

- **pronunciation:** how accurately the user pronounces words in English;
- **fluency:** the smoothness and flow of speech, without unnecessary pauses or hesitations;
- **word stress:** the emphasis put on certain syllables within words (Figure 2);
- **intonation:** the rise and fall of the voice in speaking, which can affect the meaning of what is being said;
- **listening:** likely relates to the user's ability to comprehend spoken English, possibly tested through listening exercises within the app.



Figure 1: ELSA app phoneme practice

This detailed feedback is represented in the form of percentages and an overall ELSA score indicating the user's proficiency in each category (Figure 3). The IELTS Speaking Score Predictor provides an estimation of what the user's speaking score might be if they took the IELTS (International English Language Testing System) based on their performance on the app.

For enhancing fluency, the ELSA speech analyzer offers insightful feedback on aspects like pace and pause. It notes that excessive or insufficient pauses can detrimentally impact the



Figure 2: ELSA app word stress practice

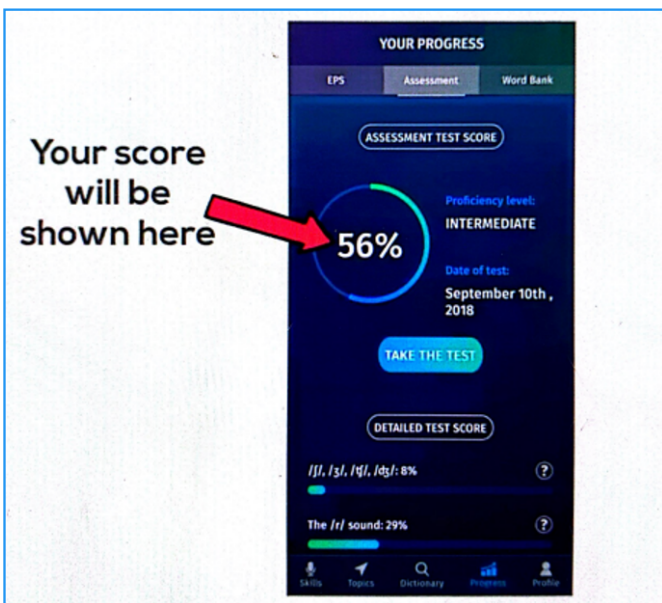


Figure 3: ELSA app feedback

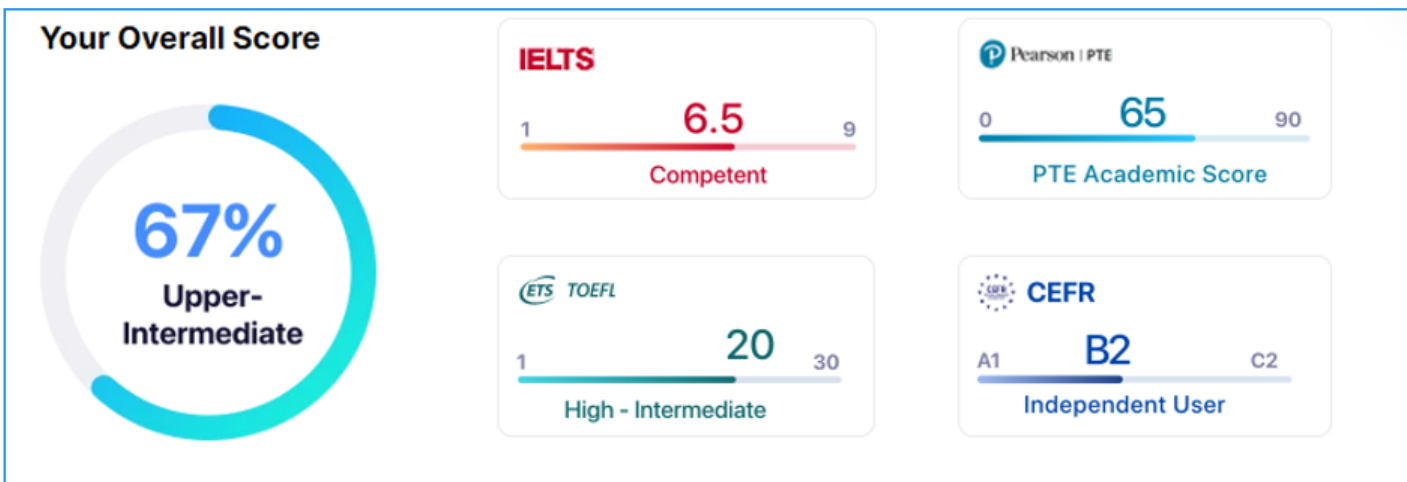


Figure 4: ELSA speech analyzer overall speaking score prediction

English fluency score. The analyzer recommends maintaining a pace of 80-120 words per minute for optimal fluency. For example, if a speaker speaks more than 120 words or less than 80 words in a one-minute of their sample speech, they will score poorly in their fluency level. Additionally, it presents a detailed view of all pauses, including their length, helping speakers identify their pauses in speaking. The tool also displays the number of words spoken per minute, enabling speakers to gauge if their speaking pace is too fast or slow. In terms of grammar, the ELSA speech analyzer identifies grammatical errors made during speaking and offers corrective feedback, allowing for real-time improvement.

This comprehensive feedback assists learners in refining both their fluency and grammatical precision in English speaking. For vocabulary, the ELSA speech analyzer provides the learner information about vocabulary levels aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); this tool allows learners to gauge their level of language competence within a few seconds.

What stands out about ELSA is its comparative analysis feature. It aligns its results with standards set by internationally recognized English proficiency tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, Pearson, CEFR, and TOEIC. This comparison may be useful for international students to prepare for these tests, providing them with a reliable self-assessment tool.

With its robust features and capabilities, ELSA can be an effective tool in classroom settings or as a supplement to traditional teaching methods. In the classroom, teachers can use the app to structure pronunciation lessons by selecting specific words or phrases that students struggle with and using the app's feedback as a teaching guide. Learners can use ELSA for unlimited times in a day to improve their English-speaking skill. Teachers may further suggest ELSA app for at home practice by learners to improve speaking skills outside of class. This hybrid learning model would allow students to get the most out of their English language learning journey.

ELSA's effectiveness is supported by various research; Zawacki-Richter et al (2019) conducted a study on AI applications in higher education, and most of the studies they reviewed

regarding Intelligence Tutoring Systems (ITS) reported positive and satisfactory results.

Furthermore, Becker & Edalatishams (2019) revealed that ELSA received a 4.5/5 rating from 23,000 users and was found to be supportive for developing English pronunciation among non-native speakers. Nushi & Sadeghi (2021) also advocated for the use of ELSA as a supplementary teaching aid for English pronunciation, as its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. A notable drawback of the ELSA (English Language Speech Assistant) app is the necessity of a subscription. The subscription cost may vary based on plans (i.e., monthly, yearly etc.) and account type (i.e., personal or business). However, research indicates that the investment in ELSA is worthwhile. This suggests that despite the initial cost, the benefits gained from using the app, in terms of improved English language skills, justify the expense. The implication is that users receive significant value from the app, which offsets the subscription fee. This finding is important for potential users weighing the cost against the potential educational benefits of ELSA.

The ELSA app represents a significant advancement in language learning technology. By adopting this tool, educators can provide learners with more opportunities to practice and improve their English language speaking skills in a flexible and personalized manner. This tool not only aids in language development but also encourages learner autonomy and personalized learning paths. Furthermore, while the ELSA app, including its speech analyzer feature, requires a subscription, school administrations have the option to subscribe by funding this resource. By doing so, they can offer free access to students, ensuring that the benefits of ELSA are available without financial barriers. This approach aligns with educational goals, providing an inclusive and accessible tool for language learning. Educators can consider integrating ELSA into their teaching practices, both inside and outside the classroom, making lessons more interactive and enriching the learning experience for students.

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CITE THIS ARTICLE

Noor, L. (2024). Harnessing ELSA for enhanced English language learning: An educator's guide. *WAESOL Educator*, 49(1), 37-39.
