



Examining the Role of AI-Based Conversation in Enhancing English Speaking Practice among Non-Native Learners

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Abstract

This study investigates how AI-powered conversational tools can enhance the practice of non-native English speakers speaking the language. Knowing how artificial intelligence affects the development of spoken language is essential as technology integrates more into language learning contexts. The main objective of this study is to investigate how students perceive and interact with AI-powered conversation technologies, including chatbots, voice-driven assistants, and dialogue-based applications. A qualitative study approach was used, and 10 undergraduate EFL students who often use AI conversational tools participated in semi-structured interviews. Key themes and patterns in their feedback were found using thematic analysis. The results showed that AI tools enhanced learners' confidence in spoken English, encouraged learner autonomy, and offered a relaxed speaking practice environment. Nevertheless, participants also pointed up negative aspects, such as the robotic character of artificial intelligence responses and the superficial nature of discussions regarding culture or emotion. The study determines the conclusion that, although AI-based conversation tools cannot replace human connection, they can serve as helpful tools to assist language learners in becoming more fluent speakers and less nervous. The findings have consequences for curriculum designers, educational technology developers, and instructors of languages who want to incorporate AI into English language courses effectively. By showcasing learner attitudes, this investigation improves the pedagogical application of conversational artificial intelligence in EFL contexts and adds to the expanding discipline of AI-assisted language acquisition.

Keywords

AI-Based Conversation, English Speaking Practice, Non-Native Learners

Introduction

Language learning in the digital age has transformed due to technological advancements, especially the incorporation of artificial intelligence. In the world of today, acquiring English becomes crucial for both academic and professional success (Graddol, 2006; Shah et al., 2022). Their potential applications in the assistance of second language acquisition, particularly with the acquisition of speaking skills, through AI-based conversational technology, including chatbots, applied AI assistants, and user-to-user conversation and communication systems, are drawing interest to these developments. Non-English majors usually face great difficulties in attempting to improve their English speaking abilities. That is mostly because it has little exposure, minimal self-esteem, and a lack of opportunities to gain practical experience. Standard teaching approaches usually disregard the

concrete facets of speaking for the purpose of emphasizing grammar and comprehension of texts (Chen et al., 2021).

The use of digital tools in teaching languages has been heralded as revolutionary in recent years. Digital tools such as internet sites, virtual reality (VR), and mobile applications give students a variety of personalized, immersive, and interactive instruction in speaking spaces (Lee & Hsieh, 2021; Alqahtani et al., 2022). The latest developments in artificial intelligence offer new techniques to address several problems. Students may practice speaking as frequently as they like in a safe environment with natural language processing tools. The effectiveness of these tools in fostering learner autonomy, improving learning new words, as well as expanding word pronunciation is regularly demonstrated by numerous studies. By qualitatively investigating non-native English speakers' perceptions of the value of artificial intelligence (AI) conversational tools in improving their speaking practice, this study seeks to close that gap. Although previous studies have mainly assessed technical efficacy, little is known regarding the way learners experience these tools on an emotional and cognitive level as they progress through the language development process.

Despite tools for conversation powered by artificial intelligence (AI), such as chatbots and artificially intelligent assistants, having become more prevalent in English language training, nothing has been learned regarding how native speakers view these tools. Using artificial intelligence interactions has been shown to significantly improve autonomy for learners, vocabulary, and spelled words within several studies (Yuan et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2022).

According to Koç and Savaş (2025), these research efforts frequently employ quantitative methods alongside meta-synthesis evaluations of most of the previous research. AI-based chatbots have surfaced as an acceptable solution for the challenges that students encounter when learning English in the past few years (Wouters et al., 2013; Shah et al., 2025). By providing engaging exercises, personalized feedback, and adaptive learning processes, these chatbots might help learners in significantly enhancing their language proficiency (Chapelle, 2000; Wouters et al., 2013). Nevertheless, perceptions on the part of learners, emotions, and experience-related themes such as serenity or a nonjudgmental environment remain clinical (Hristan & Rifia, 2021; Jeon, 2022). Although it is possible also because of recent facts, some recent qualitative research would factor in psychological and emotional variables such as organization, grit, and truncation in learner speech patterns (e.g., ChatGPT-enhanced EFL learning; Alshammari, 2023; Qin & Zhou, 2024), the latter are not especially focused on the experience of speaking training. Technology also allows a learner-centered approach that will provide independent practice, flexibility, and personalization opportunities (Lee & Hsieh, 2021). Even with these encouraging developments, individuals who are not majoring in English continue to inadequate utilization technology for speaking practice. Other challenges that non-English majors may encounter include low levels of computer proficiency, ignorance of the available technological resources, and trouble incorporating these resources into their educational habits. These limitations show that customized approaches are required to optimize the use of technology in reaching the unique requirements of this learner population (Shah et al., 2025; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2020). The purpose of the research is to improve the skills of English writing among non-native language learners. In this way, they test how non-native English speakers use AI conversation tools and what challenges are encounter. This research considers important standards, emotions, and opportunities.

Research Questions

- Q1: What do non-native learners of English feel about using AI chatbots as an interactive Speaking Practice tool?
- Q2: How do learners perceive the differences between AI-based speaking tools and traditional instructional methods?

Literature Review

Learning and teaching techniques have advanced in the past few years with the evolution of AI (Artificial Intelligence) as part of the education system (Zwak-Richter et al., 2020). Learners can engage in 12-speaker interactions, enhance speaking skills, and promote student-centered instruction through the use of technology-mediated task-based language instruction techniques (Chong and Reinders, 2020). Based on a systematic review, it has been observed that speaking skills can be improved in terms of pronunciation, overcome anxiety, and build confidence and interest in learners through AI chatbots designed to reinforce learning.

Recent research has also explored the application of AI-powered chatbots in language acquisition. For example, Al-Harbi and Al-Tashood's (2020) study found that AI-based chatbots can increase students' interest and enhance language proficiency. Chen and Li (2020) investigated the application of AI-powered chatbots in language learning and found that they can also offer students ways to practice with customized suggestions. Studies have also shown that AI chatbots have the potential to provide learners with adaptive learning methods, which can help learners develop their oral proficiency more effectively (Wang and Dostan, 2020). According to Benson (2020), the use of chatbots can also promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning. Positive effects on language learning have also been observed in those who use AI-based chatbots by adopting a positive attitude towards the language learning process. For example, Liu et al. (2020) found that learners who used AI-based chatbots were less likely to engage in language learning and less likely to be anxious.

The AI-aided platforms incorporated into social media applications, such as WeChat, encouraged motivation and practice routines, contributed to fluency, pronunciation, and oral coherence, but anxiety about recording and time limitations were found to deter some of the learners. AI-based chatbots in language learning are discussed as having potential in the literature review, especially in terms of the ability to offer personalized feedback opportunities, interactive practice tasks, and adaptive learning pathways to learners. But few studies have been conducted in the context of the effectiveness of the AI-based chatbots, where the issues of learners are not common. In this study, the goals are to examine the Role of AI-based conversation in enhancing English Speaking Practice by Non Native learners.

Theoretical Framework

Computer-Mediated Communication Theory

The research will be based on Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory, which would examine how technology is used to mediate communication and do collaborative work (Herring, 2001; Walther, 1996). The CMC Theory believes that technology can enhance communication by way of avenues to provide and receive input/feedback and guidance (Kozma, 1991).

Employing CMC Theory in AI-Powered Language Learning

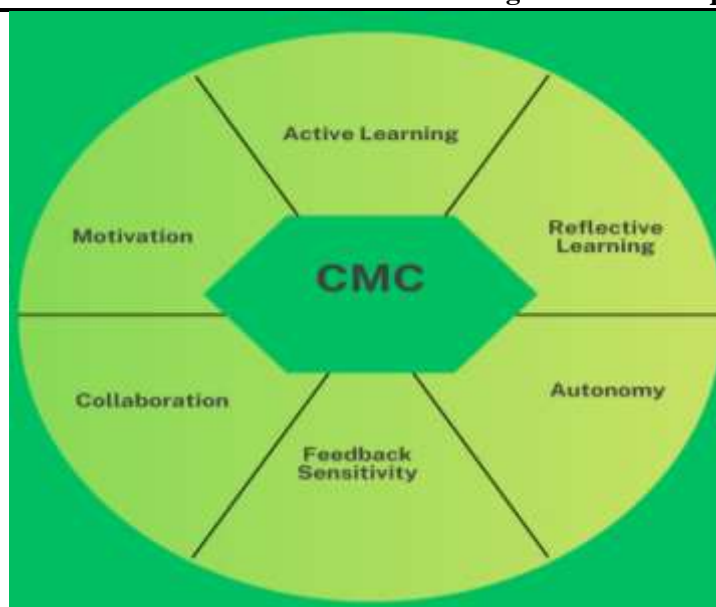
Chatbots and virtual assistants are examples of conversational technologies that use artificial intelligence, which can be perceived as part and parcel of CMC environments when it comes to acquiring English. Such tools, simulating real speech and grounded in the concepts of CMC theory, give students a chance to train their listening and speaking skills in real time. Chapelle (2003) and Egbert (2005) demonstrate how a model comprising the CMC Theory of perceiving the usefulness of AI-based chatbots would assist in such language acquisition into the general framework of the research.

The Purpose of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Educational Assistance

AI-powered chatbots can be seen as adaptive response agents from the perspective of educationists. Conceptually, the experiences of students studying a language can be enhanced by AI-based chatbots that offer specific feedback, support, and direction. This is particularly applicable to learners who have little access to native speakers or real-life speaking situations. This argument is supported by CMC theory, which states that digital conversation partners are helpful when designed appropriately, in which they lead to conversational competence.

A Critical Approach to Student Experience

In the context of learners' experiences and chatbots using artificial intelligence, the first and latter quality interview questions were analyzed. The study is based on CMC theory, which helps us understand how AI-Powered chat boats can be helpful in enhancing language and student performance.



Reflective Learning

It helps learners speak with self-awareness and think critically about and improve upon their experiences.

Autonomy

Facilitates self-learning through the ability of the user to learn at their own pace and practice.

Collaboration

Allows dialoging that recreates the conditions of social speaking.

Motivation

Enhances student engagement through immediate input as well as dynamic AI interaction.

Active learning

Engages students in live speaking exercises to improve fluency and recall.

Feedback sensitivity

Facilitates learning by giving immediate, responsive feedback, which helps learners to make more precise language production.

Additionally, the conditions of AI-assisted language acquisition are significantly impacted by collaborative skills (Fitria, 2023). The use of feedback processes in AI systems is closely related to collaborative capabilities. This investigated the use of chatbots in spoken language learning and found that it can increase motivation and student engagement. Found that AI-powered chatbots can help learners become more proficient in the language and reduce their anxiety.

More research is needed on the true impact of conversational tools on academic achievement and participation. It also affects learner engagement. Research needs to be done. When we talk about the increasing use of technology in language instruction, we find that there is still some quality research that needs to be done. This research includes the opinions of learners and their real experiences, especially in the field of teaching. The purpose of this research is to tell us how we can learn languages better. AI-powered learning technologies have been associated with better self-regulated learning and higher motivation in English language learners (Carpio Cañada et al., 2015; Ebadi and Amini, 2022; Hsu et al., 2023).

Methodology

This research adopted a standardized approach to examine how left-handed learners experience AI-based chat tools to enhance their English speaking ability. The current study adopted a case study based on a standard methodology, since it provides a thorough analysis. Historical context of the study and subjective experiences of the participants were considered (Yin, 2014; Creswell, 2013). This approach will allow the researcher to derive in-depth information, which is significant. AI-based chatbots work well for language acquisition. (Mariam, 2009; Stack, 2010). This provides a complex and diverse approach to investigation. The experiences of non-native learners using AI-based chatbots to learn English are the specific methodology for this study (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The 10

students who took part in the study were students taking English language classes. Such students studied in English language sessions at universities.

Semi-structured interviews allowed for open discussion of participants' experiences. To ensure that the key study questions were answered. Depending on availability and Participant interests, interviews were conducted either in person or using voice notes. All the interviews were individualized and of about 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the comfort of the participants. These were then transcribed and translated if necessary. Thematic analysis was used to study Brown and Clarke (2006). This yielded students' opinions, advantages, disadvantages, and perspectives related to recurring patterns and trends in common experiences with AI speaking devices. In the first phase of the interviews, thematic analysis was applied to analyze the transcripts. This was needed to identify recurring themes that were important for confidence in speaking, learning autonomy, motivation, and interaction with AI. Topics were identified, and then explained how to proceed. Various methods were used to improve reliability and trustworthiness, including member checking and peer review. All issues were covered in the research process, such as ethical issues, consent, and participant confidentiality.

Findings

The results show the importance of research and explore how undergraduate students perceive and experience the use of AI tools to enhance their speaking skills. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with students who had experience using AI tools such as ChatGPT, Duolingo's AI chatbots, and ELSA Speak. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns in students' perceptions, experiences, and challenges related to speaking practice.

Q1: What do non-native learners of English feel about using AI chatbots as an interactive Speaking Practice tool?

Reflections of a Judgment-Free Educational Society

The participants stated that AI-based applications offered a safe psychological environment to practice language. With the unprecedented safety of being non-judgmental, no fear of judgment, embarrassment, or barriers to participating, platforms like ChatGPT, Replika AI, and the AI chatbot in Duolingo were all viewed to be non-presentational interlocutors in comparison to classroom interactions. This decreased the anxiety of learners and promoted their readiness to practice speaking.

I feel more comfortable speaking with ChatGPT. One participant highlighted how conversational exchanges allow for emotionally harmonious relations while stating, *"It doesn't laugh or interrupt me."*

Quick Response and Language Adaptation

Other students have focused on the real-time feedback offered by Speakify AI and ELSA Speak. Such systems enabled learners to be able to detect their mistakes and rectify them instantly as they received their feedback instantly in terms of their grammar, pronunciation, and tone.

This aspect was seen as a great gain to classroom methods in which feedback is usually late or generalized.

Efficiency and Accessible

AI platform flexibility came out as a powerful topic. Students enjoyed the use of tools like Talk Pal and Andy English Speaking Bot as they could freely use them, as they do not have to worry about timings or being present, since they can use them anytime and anywhere.

I can practice any time, even at midnight. Another respondent said, "You cannot do that in class," a testament to the convenience associated with on-demand learning.

Q2: How do learners perceive the differences between AI-based speaking tools and traditional instructional methods?

Personalized Communication and Subject Autonomy

The participants state that AI technologies offer customized conversations. Compared to instructional settings where the subjects to be discussed are dictated by the curriculum, ChatGPT and Replika AI allow the students to choose subjects of discussion based on their interests or things in their daily lives.

Higher levels of engagement and practicing motivation were facilitated by this autonomy, especially for self-directed learners.

Lack of Cultural Indications or Human Emotions

Despite the language advantages, a number of students felt that chatbot conversations lacked emotional depth. Comparing the lack of nonverbal clues to actual interactions between people within classroom situations, such as humor, actions, and facial expressions, was considered a downside.

According to a student, there is a gap in emotional communication because "AI recognizes words, but it is unfamiliar with feelings."

Advancement of Self-Study but Limited Contact with Peers

Learner autonomy was also identified as a matter of AI platforms. Nonetheless, most respondents reported that physical classrooms provide important, rich collaborative learning opportunities via group discussions, role plays, receiving feedback in a group of peers, and so on, which cannot be emulated in their entirety in the context of chatbots.

Although AI assists in the practice on an individual level, it is unable to give the kind of social interaction and collective learning experience that comes with communicative competence.

Discussion

The findings of our study show that AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Duolingo, Replika, and Speak AI, were seen as effective tools by learners aimed at organizing the practice of speaking. These tools were in accordance with Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory by giving learners time to interact in real-time, get feedback immediately, and learn target language constructions without fear of human judgment. According to other studies, AI-based chatbots can give students useful feedback and practice opportunities. This policy of making the passive participant of the conversation plays a major role. Output-based learning is emphasized in the CMC framework. Previous research has demonstrated that AI-based chatbots can increase learner motivation and engagement, which lends credence to this conclusion (Lee, 2018; Park & Kim, 2017; Kim, 2018).

A new theme that has emerged is based on the increased sense of autonomy that comes with the learning experience, the advantage of using AI tools as opposed to a rigid classroom schedule, and the ability of participants to maintain practice anytime, anywhere, and without limitations. According to CMC theory, emphasizing learner-centeredness and consistency significantly enhances the development of effective communication skills. This has been promoted by settings and past studies that have argued in favour of self-regulated learning through technology (Chapple, 2003; Egbert, 2005).

A characteristic of chatbots is that they suggest topics to discuss after learning the individual's opinion and touching on these topics with interest. Their flexibility enables them to help them learn languages. This is a sure sign that chatbots are adapted to their levels and interests. (Chapple, 2003; Herring, 2001; Warschauer, 1997). The research also emphasizes the technical importance of the use and relevance of AI design in language-learning-based chatbots. According to participants, the chatbot was useful and convenient to use, and they had no technical problems. The research reveals that this value is in line with the past research. The findings have been cited that emphasize the importance of technological use in language learning—design (Chapple, 2003; Levy, 2009).

This finding has been reinforced by other studies, both in consistency and in confirmation of its importance. Along with the interest in language development, there is also a growing enthusiasm (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dörnyei, 2005). The participants also repeatedly talked about the differences between AI-based and traditional classroom speaking tasks. Although classrooms were appreciated due to human interaction and subtle feedback, learners termed them as intimidating at times and time-bound.

Such experiences underline that learners did not necessarily view AI tools as an alternative to classroom instructional strategies but as a valuable resource to address the weaknesses in the development of fluency and provide learners with additional confidence to speak.

Conclusion

The study examined how foreign speakers of English perceive and interact with artificial intelligence-based conversational tools for practicing speaking English in interpersonal interactions. Because the core study focuses on the use of digital technologies in learning, namely, ChatGPT, Replika, Duolingo, and Speak AI, to independently, reflectively, and inspirationally improve their speaking skills, the results of the research were based on the progressive Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) framework.

According to earlier studies, AI-based chatbots can be useful in enhancing language learning results and motivation (Wouters et al., 2013; Lee, 2018; Park & Kim, 2017). The results indicated that the learners think that AI tools are valuable as a general rule, mainly because of the lack of evaluation, accessibility, real-time simulations, and so forth. Participants also highlighted the benefit of these tools in encouraging the principle of active learning, autonomy, and motivation among learners, a factor that is, in most cases, constrained in a regular classroom setting.

Speaking tools targeted at AI have great potential as assistive and effective tools in language acquisition. Though they cannot replace face-to-face human interaction in classrooms, their integration into the learning and teaching process can offer a balanced learner-centered orientation that satisfies the demands of the increasing transformations of language students in the 21st century.

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