

Speaking Practice using ChatGPT's Voice Conversation: A Review on Potentials and Concerns

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Abstract

Investigating the pedagogical potentials and concerns of ChatGPT's voice conversation feature within the context of language learning, this study begins by exploring the historical context and limitations of traditional language learning methods, such as language exchange, conversation classes, and role-plays. The discussion then shifts to the rise of AI in education, highlighting ChatGPT's advanced capabilities in providing personalized, interactive, and efficient language instruction through natural language processing, machine learning, and speech recognition. While offering advantages such as accessibility, adaptability, and personalized feedback, the technology also presents limitations in accurately assessing pronunciation and contextual nuances. To effectively integrate ChatGPT into language instruction, educators must carefully consider its strengths and weaknesses. This research explores those things to optimize their use and ensure they complement, rather than replace, traditional language teaching methods.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology has ushered in a new era of language learning, with artificial intelligence (AI) emerging as a transformative force. Among the burgeoning array of AI-powered language learning tools, ChatGPT has garnered significant attention for its potential to revolutionize speaking practice. This paper delves into the efficacy of ChatGPT as a tool for enhancing oral proficiency. To achieve this, the following sections will explore the historical context of language learning, examining traditional methods and their limitations. Subsequently, the paper will illuminate the rise of AI in language education, focusing on ChatGPT's capabilities and potential. By juxtaposing these elements, the study aims to identify the research gap and contribute to the ongoing discourse on AI-driven language learning.

Language learning is a complex process involving the acquisition of linguistic competence (Shobikah, 2020; Kilroe, 2019; Sattorova, 2021) across various modalities: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. While each skill is indispensable (Anatolevna, 2023), speaking occupies a paramount role in human interaction (Yusifli, K. 2018). It is through spoken language that individuals exchange ideas, build relationships, and fully participate in social and professional environments (Rattan, 2023).

The ability to communicate fluently and effectively in a foreign language has become increasingly vital in today's interconnected world (Bui, 2023). Proficiency in spoken language unlocks a plethora of opportunities, from academic pursuits and career advancement (Rattan, 2023) to cultural exchange and personal enrichment. Speaking skills are essential for navigating diverse social and professional contexts (Rattan, 2023), fostering intercultural understanding, and building meaningful connections with people from different backgrounds Sabirova, Khanipova, & Sagitova, (2021). Consequently, developing strong oral communication abilities has emerged as a core objective for language learners worldwide.

Traditional methods of developing oral proficiency have centered around language exchange, conversation classes, and role-plays (Long, 2023). While these approaches have contributed to language learning, they present inherent limitations. Thus, it is time to keep up with the development of technology in order to boost the effectiveness in teaching speaking.

Language exchange offers learners the opportunity for authentic interaction and cultural exchange. However, its effectiveness hinges on finding a suitable partner with compatible language learning goals and availability as it triggers fear of speaking (Sultana & Jamin, 2021). The lack of structured feedback and potential disparities in language proficiency can also hinder progress. Conversation classes

provide a controlled environment for learners to practice speaking in a group setting. While they facilitate vocabulary expansion and grammatical accuracy, limited individual speaking time and potential learner anxiety can impede language development. Role-plays, on the other hand, simulate real-world scenarios, enhancing communicative competence and critical thinking skills (Krebt, 2017; Henisah, Margana, Putri, Berryl & Kowal, 2022; & Kha, 2023). Yet, the artificial nature of these situations may not fully replicate the complexities of authentic communication.

These traditional methods, while valuable, often fall short in providing the intensive, individualized, and immediate feedback essential for rapid language acquisition (Guado & Mayorga, 2021). The limitations of these approaches have spurred the exploration of innovative methodologies, including the integration of technology into language learning.

By harnessing the power of advanced algorithms, AI-driven platforms offer unprecedented opportunities (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2019) for personalized, interactive, and efficient language acquisition. Through natural language processing, machine learning, and speech recognition, these technologies provide learners with tailored instruction, immediate feedback, and immersive language practice (Rakza, 2023).

AI-powered virtual language tutors and chatbots simulate real-world conversational interactions, enabling learners to develop fluency, accuracy, and communicative competence (Rakza, 2023). Moreover, AI algorithms meticulously analyze learner data to identify strengths, weaknesses, and learning preferences, facilitating the creation of customized learning paths (Parapadakis, 2020; Hemachandran, *et. al.* 2022). This data-driven approach optimizes language instruction, ensuring that learners receive targeted support and challenges to maximize their potential.

While the promise of AI in language learning is undeniable, its integration also presents challenges (Zhai, *et.al.*, 2021). Issues such as data privacy, algorithm bias, and the potential for overreliance on technology demand careful consideration. To fully realize the benefits of AI while mitigating its drawbacks, a balanced approach is essential (Liang, 2023). By combining human expertise with technological innovation, language educators can create hybrid learning environments that foster both language proficiency and critical thinking skills.

ChatGPT, a state-of-the-art language model developed by OpenAI, represents a significant leap forward in natural language processing. Built upon the foundation of its predecessors, ChatGPT excels in generating human-quality text across an expansive range of creative formats, from composing emails to crafting poems. Its ability to engage in comprehensive and contextually relevant

conversations sets it apart from earlier models (Lin, Huang, & Yang 2023; Roumeliotis & Tselikas, 2023), which often struggled to maintain coherence and depth in dialogue.

The model's proficiency is cultivated through an extensive training process on a massive dataset, enabling it to acquire a profound understanding of linguistic patterns, nuances, and complexities. This knowledge empowers ChatGPT to produce text that is not only grammatically correct but also semantically rich and contextually appropriate (Tan, 2023; Fergus, Botha, & Ostovar, 2023). Unlike its predecessors, which frequently encountered challenges in generating factually accurate and informative outputs, ChatGPT demonstrates a remarkable capacity to provide relevant and informative responses (Lo, 2023).

However, it is essential to approach ChatGPT's output with a critical eye. While the model exhibits impressive linguistic capabilities, it lacks genuine comprehension and may occasionally produce incorrect or misleading information (Biswas, 2023; Ahmad, Kaiser, & Rahim, 2023). As such, human oversight and verification remain indispensable when utilizing ChatGPT-generated content.

In comparison to previous AI language models, ChatGPT showcases a more sophisticated grasp of language, enabling it to produce text that is not only informative but also engaging and persuasive. Its adaptability to various writing styles and tones further broadens its applicability across diverse domains. Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that ChatGPT is a tool designed to assist humans (Taraevska & Voloshynovych, 2023), rather than replace them (Sonawane & Khandalkar, 2023). Human creativity, judgment, and critical thinking remain essential for harnessing the full potential of this technology (Giaccardi & Redström, 2020; Giuliano, *et. al.*, 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking is a fundamental language skill that most individuals aspire to master. As language serves as a tool for communication, effective speaking is essential for interacting with others. Researchers and educators have explored various techniques and strategies to enhance the speaking abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Several empirical studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of various pedagogical approaches in enhancing EFL learners' speaking proficiency. For instance, Maftuna (2023) observed that peer dialogue can significantly contribute to the development of speaking skills. Similarly, Roza, Rafli, and Rahmat (2019) found the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) method to be a viable alternative for fostering speaking abilities by integrating conceptual understanding with practical application. Usmiyatun et al. (2023) further highlighted the benefits of Jigsaw activities in promoting students'

speaking skills. Additionally, Momon's (2020) research on the Show-and-Tell and Media (Bupaka) model revealed that a substantial majority of students demonstrated improved speaking skills, with notable improvements in voice volume and storytelling abilities.

Furthermore, Sembiring and Ginting (2019) employed storytelling techniques to enhance the speaking skills of eighth-grade students, resulting in a significant increase in their oral proficiency. Ban et al. (2023) also emphasized the importance of debate in cultivating students' speaking skills. In a comparative study, Neupane (2019) found that students exposed to role-playing activities outperformed those taught through conventional methods in terms of speaking skills acquisition. These findings collectively underscore the efficacy of these teaching strategies in fostering EFL learners' speaking skills, suggesting that incorporating them into language instruction can lead to substantial improvements in students' oral communication abilities.

In the contemporary technological landscape, the traditional methods of dialogue, storytelling, role-playing, debate, and Show-and-Tell have been augmented by digital tools. This shift has enabled learners to engage in these activities virtually, facilitating more accessible and interactive language learning experiences. Moreover, the emergence of advanced language learning software and platforms has provided learners with personalized instruction, adaptive content, and opportunities for real-time interaction with native speakers (Dia, 2024). These digital tools have the potential to revolutionize EFL education by offering innovative and effective approaches to language acquisition.

The advent of the digital age has witnessed a significant proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, which have been increasingly integrated into various domains, including education. In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, AI-powered speech evaluation programs equipped with automatic speech recognition (ASR) have emerged as valuable tools for assisting learners in their speaking practice. Studies conducted by Kannan and Munday (2018) and Natale and Cooke (2021) have highlighted the potential benefits of these AI technologies in supporting EFL learners' speaking development. Dai and Wu (2023), Dizon (2020), Wang and Young (2015), and Xiao and Park (2021) have further underscored the positive impact of AI speech evaluation programs on second or foreign language learners' speaking skills.

As mentioned before, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the field of education has opened up new avenues for language learning. Therefore, some AI tools have been familiar in teaching and learning process. ChatGPT, a sophisticated language model, has emerged as a promising tool for enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction (Kim et al, 2023). One of

ChatGPT's key strengths lies in its ability to provide real-time feedback, a critical component of effective language learning. By offering immediate and relevant feedback, ChatGPT can significantly contribute to learners' understanding and application of language concepts, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.

The incorporation of ChatGPT into EFL classrooms aligns with contemporary pedagogical approaches that emphasize the importance of technology-enhanced learning. ChatGPT's natural language processing capabilities enable it to simulate human-like conversations, providing learners with authentic language practice. Moreover, its ability to offer personalized instruction tailored to individual needs and preferences is consistent with best practices in language teaching and learning (Songsienchai et al, 2023).

The utilization of ChatGPT can also foster learner autonomy and independence. By providing learners with opportunities for self-directed practice and exploration, ChatGPT can empower them to take ownership of their language learning journey. This aligns with the growing emphasis on learner-centered approaches to education and the development of lifelong learning skills (Zhong, 2018).

DISCUSSION

As the integration of ChatGPT into speaking practice gains momentum, it is crucial to explore both its potentials and concerns. On one hand, ChatGPT offers a range of advantages, such as providing a non-judgmental space for practice, enabling diverse conversational topics, and offering accessibility and convenience. These features can significantly enhance learners' language skills by fostering engagement, flexibility, and personalized feedback.

However, it is equally important to address the limitations associated with ChatGPT's use. Challenges such as the lack of real-time voice interaction, limited contextual understanding, and the risk of overreliance warrant careful consideration. These concerns can impact the effectiveness of speaking practice and the development of comprehensive language skills.

In this discussion, we will delve into these aspects, examining how ChatGPT can be harnessed effectively while also identifying strategies to mitigate its limitations. By balancing its potential with a critical understanding of its constraints, we can better navigate the integration of this tool into language learning environments.

ChatGPT's Voice Conversation Feature: Some Potentials for Speaking Practices

Accessibility and Convenience

Learners can access ChatGPT anytime and anywhere which enables them to practice speaking whenever and wherever they prefer. This eliminates the needs for physically present language tutors or speaking partners. The natural language capabilities of ChatGPT can make it a highly engaging and motivating tool for EFL learners (Baskara, 2023). Additionally, using ChatGPT for speaking practice is often more affordable than traditional language classes or private tutoring. This cost-effectiveness makes speaking practice accessible to a wide range of learners, including those who might have limited budgets. Thus, practice speaking with ChatGPT provides a comfortable and private environment

Immediate and Personalized Feedback

Even if learners speak with limited grammatical accuracy, ChatGPT can still grasp their intended meaning and will rephrase their sentences in correct grammar. Additionally, each learner receives individualized feedback on the sentences they produce based on their individual needs and skill level. Baskara (2023) informed that ChatGPT represents a new and potentially transformative technology in this area, as it can generate human-like text and provide real-time feedback and support for learners. By being exposed to correctly structured sentences, learners are expected to become familiar with them and eventually produce accurate sentences themselves.

Safe and Non-Judgmental Environment

A key benefit of using ChatGPT for speaking practice is that it offers a safe and non-judgmental environment. As Zhou and Li (2023) stated that when learners are interested and engaged in using ChatGPT as a learning tool, they often do not feel stressed or anxious, as they believe they can become familiar with or utilize it to enhance their learning outcomes. This allows learners to practice speaking without the fear of making mistakes or being evaluated critically. Unlike traditional settings where learners might feel anxious or self-conscious, ChatGPT provides a supportive space where errors are viewed as part of the learning process. This fosters greater confidence and encourages learners to experiment with their language skill more freely. Songsingchai, Sereerat, and Watananimitgul (2023) imply that integrating ChatGPT into the educational environment can enhance learners' motivation, build strong confidence, and promote a positive attitude shift. By interacting with an AI, learners avoid the stress of performing in front of peers or teachers. This reduction in performance anxiety allows them to focus on

practicing and refining their skill with less pressure, leading to increased confidence.

Diverse Conversational Topics

Engaging in a wide range of topics allow learners to encounter and practice different vocabulary, phrases, and sentence structures. Kim, Shim, & Shim (2023) added that ChatGPT allows abundant learning experiences in various contexts with learners' needs. This exposure helps them become more versatile in their language use and better prepared to handle various conversational contexts. By discussing diverse subjects, learners can practice adapting their language skills to different scenarios whether in casual or formal discussions. This enhances their ability to communicate effectively in various real-life situations. Talking about a variety of topics encourages learners to think critically and articulate their ideas clearly. In the end, they will be familiar with expressing opinions, debating, and explaining concepts which helps improve their overall communicative competence.

Customizability

ChatGPT offers a flexible and accessible platform for regular practice. It assists teachers by providing speaking practice to help students improve their speaking skills and enhance their language expression (Huang & Li, 2023). The opportunity to practice anytime and anywhere helps learners stay motivated as they can integrate speaking practice into their daily routine without the constraints of scheduled classes.

Concerns and Limitations of ChatGPT's Voice Conversation Feature for Speaking Practice

Lack of Pronunciation Feedback

ChatGPT lacks the capability to analyze spoken language or provide feedback on pronunciation. As a result, learners miss out on essential corrections for how they articulate words and sounds. This can make it challenging for them to self-correct and refine their pronunciation independently. Additionally, it can lead to misunderstanding and result in less-suitable responses by ChatGPT as pronunciation is a critical aspect of speaking clearly and being understood. Without feedback on how well they pronounce words, learners may struggle to improve their pronunciation accuracy, which can hinder their overall speaking effectiveness.

This allowed the teacher to take over and facilitate a discussion around the limitations of ChatGPT (Javier and Moorhouse, 2023). To confront those obstacles, learners might need to supplement their practice with other resources, such as

pronunciation guides or sessions with language teachers or tutors who can provide corrective feedback on pronunciation.

Limited Contextual Understanding and Nuance

ChatGPT, while advanced, may struggle to fully grasp the context of a conversation in the same way a human would. It can sometimes miss the subtleties of specific situations or cultural references, which can impact the relevance and accuracy of the practice. Effective communication often relies on understanding and conveying nuanced meanings, such as tone, sarcasm, or implied meanings, which ChatGPT may not always interpret correctly.

In human interactions, conversational flow is influenced by shared experiences, emotions, and subtleties that add depth to discussion. ChatGPT's responses are generated based on patterns and data rather than personal experiences, which can sometimes result in more superficial or formulaic interactions. It lacks the ability to deeply understand context, interpret complex emotions, and generate truly original ideas (Teng, 2024). To overcome these concerns, learners might need to complement their practice with real-life human conversation.

Absence of Real-Time Voice Interaction

Real-time voice interaction involves nuances such as pauses, interruptions, and natural conversation flow. Thus, learners may miss out on practicing these dynamic aspects of conversation, which are crucial for developing fluency and naturalness in speaking. Effective speaking requires the ability to modulate voice pitch, volume, and speed. ChatGPT's responses lack this feature and cannot give feedback on these vocal aspects to learners, though it is important for clear and engaging spoken communication. While ChatGPT can significantly enhance the process of second language acquisition, it is essential to note that it should complement, not replace, human instructors and real-life language practice (Songsingchai, Sereerat & Watananimitgul, 2023). Therefore, to address these limitations, learners might need to use language learning platforms that offer real-time voice interaction to develop a more comprehensive speaking skill set.

Risk of Overreliance

Learners might become overly dependent on ChatGPT for generating response and feedback. This reliance can hinder their ability to practice and develop skills in real-world interaction, where responses are less predictable and more dynamic. Besides, Monica and Suganthan (2024) emphasize that ChatGPT must be used responsibly, taking into account personal roles and responsibilities, as individuals might otherwise exploit AI for exams, assignments, and grading.

ChatGPT, while useful, cannot fully replicate the complexity of human conversation, including the subtleties of emotional cues, varying accents, and unpredictable responses. Relying solely on ChatGPT might limit learners' exposure to these critical aspects of authentic communication. A collaborative approach where teachers systematically integrate and supervise the use of ChatGPT ensured that learners can fully benefit from the tool's capabilities while receiving the necessary guidance and support from their instructors (Teng, 2024). To mitigate the risk of overreliance, learners should balance their practice with other forms of language exposure and interaction.

CONCLUSION

This review has delved into the potential of ChatGPT's voice conversation feature as a tool for language learners, specifically focusing on its application to speaking practice. The technology offers several advantages, including accessibility, adaptability, and the potential for personalized feedback, which can significantly enhance language learning experiences. Learners can benefit from increased opportunities to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment, receive immediate feedback on pronunciation and fluency, and engage with the language in a more dynamic way.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this technology. While ChatGPT can simulate human conversation, it lacks the nuances and complexities of real-world interactions. Additionally, there are concerns regarding the quality of feedback, potential biases in the language model, and the ethical implications of relying heavily on AI for language learning.

To fully realize the potential of ChatGPT as a language learning tool, future research should concentrate on addressing these challenges and exploring innovative ways to integrate it into language teaching and learning practices. By carefully considering the potentials and concerns of this technology, educators and learners can make informed decisions about its effective utilization.

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