



Enhancing the Speaking Skills of Tertiary-level Learners through AI-integrated English Language Pedagogy: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) transforms and revolutionizes the landscape of language education in the present scenario. The potential of AI is widely discussed in various research studies. Whereas, the opportunities of English language speaking skill enhancement in the pedagogy of tertiary-level learners need specific attention as higher education escalate the learners into professionals. AI-integrated pedagogical methods possibly augment the use of language to develop speaking skills. Therefore, this paper conceptually reviews the role of AI in developing the English language speaking skills through open source or limited access AI powered tools and suggests methods to integrate them into the English language pedagogy of tertiary-level learners. The conceptual theoretical review conducted corroborates the salient role of AI in English language education. Likewise, language learning and educational technology theories are discussed in association to AI tools for their incorporation in future research studies. The findings highlight the significant role of AI tools in improving the speaking skills focusing on parameters such as vocabulary learning, fluency, grammar and other communicative abilities. ChatGPT (dictate mode), ChatGPT (voice mode), Smalltalk2me, ELSA speak, Google translate and Duolingo are the AI tools reviewed in the study. These tools enhance various aspects of speech. They are partially-free to use for everyday practice. In addition, flipped classroom method, task-based method, project-based method and gamification with AI support are the notable methods to integrate AI tools into the pedagogy for enhancing English speaking skills of tertiary-level learners.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), AI tools, English language, English speaking skills, language pedagogy, tertiary-level English language learners

Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of language learning as AI tools support personalized, adaptive and learner-centered learning (Yang et al., 2021). In addition, AI tools offer significant learning opportunities such as intelligent tutoring, chatbots and automated assessment (Harry, 2023). Moreover, the recent studies (Huang, Wang, & Zhang, 2024; Wu, Wang, & Wang, 2024)

ascertain that acceptance of AI in language learning enhances their motivation and engagement in the learning environment.

Despite many studies focusing on the potential of AI tools in learning, limited emphasis is given to AI tools used in the English language pedagogy for enhancing speaking skills and the methods to integrate them in the curriculum. Therefore, the paper aims to explore the role of AI tools and the



methods for integrating them into the English language pedagogy to enhance speaking skills of tertiary level English language learners. The following objectives and research questions are explored based on the aim of the study.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are

1. To understand the role of AI in English language speaking.
2. To identify different AI tools used for improving English language speaking skills.
3. To discuss the methods to integrate AI tools in the English Language Pedagogy for enhancing speaking skills.

Research Questions

RQ₁. What is the role of AI tools in improving English language speaking skills?

RQ₂. Which are the available AI tools to improve the speaking skills of tertiary-level English language learners?

RQ₃. What are the methods to integrate AI tools into the English language pedagogy?

Literature Review

AI and English Language Teaching

AI has the potential to transform ELT by promoting personalized and interactive language learning. AI Tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, NLP applications and visual assistants create a learning environment that is both adaptive and interactive. Intelligent tutoring systems can adjust the difficulty of tasks according to learner performance, while NLP-powered applications and chatbots provide immediate corrective feedback in speaking and writing. This promotes autonomy and confidence in the learners, making the process more immersive and effective (Yusupova et al., 2024). Moreover, AI-powered tools improve the pedagogical process as individual attention and personalization support the needs of learners.

AI tools significantly enhance proficiency in speaking and writing. This effectiveness depends on addressing challenges such as limited accessibility,

lack of learner preparedness and ethical concerns. A constructive framework addressing these limitations is needed to maximize the effect of AI (Kristiawan et al., 2024) in the pedagogical process.

AI and English Language Learners

The studies (Karim et al., 2023 & Anggraini, A. 2022) have shown that the use of AI powered applications such as ELSA Speak is perceived positively by EFL learners. The app provided clear pronunciation guidance, instant feedback and personalized learning opportunities helping learners gain confidence and improve fluency (Karim et al., 2023). The engaging features of ELSA Speak motivated the learners to practice more frequently and regularly, highlighting the effectiveness of AI in autonomous learning. AI tools have a significant impact on the development of English writing skills among learners. Van (2025) investigated the impact of AI tools on English writing skills and examined tools including ChatGPT, Grammarly and QuillBot. The practice of these tools affected the learners' writing skills specifically grammar, vocabulary and their writing quality by fostering them to generate ideas, organize content and offer a self-regulated learning practice.

AI in Curriculum Development

The integration of AI in curriculum development has the potential to transform education by delivering personalized, adaptable and engaging learning experiences. The traditional educational curriculum often struggles to accommodate the diverse learning styles and needs of learners, resulting in missed opportunities. Ejjami (2024) advocates the development of AI-based curricula to create a flexible, interdisciplinary learning environment while addressing existing concerns of inequities and data privacy.

The integration of AI into education requires AI literacy, an understanding of AI technologies and their societal impacts. In a modern classroom, AI literacy goes beyond traditional learning paradigms, equipping learners and instructors with the skills to



navigate and maximize the power of AI in various aspects of life and work (Walter, 2024).

Theories Related to the Study

The application of AI tools in English language learning is grounded in various theories. The current study is informed by language learning and educational technology theories that support the use of AI tools to enhance speaking skills in the English language pedagogy.

Language Learning Theories

Constructivist Language Learning Theory

Constructivist language learning theory explains how learners construct new knowledge based on the already existing knowledge and prior experiences (Behrens, 2021). AI tools provide an authentic context for English language learning, allowing users to experience the real environment for speaking. These tools also provide learners with opportunities to practice sentence construction and vocabulary usage in actual contexts.

Behaviourist Learning Theory

Behaviourist learning theory helps in understanding the relationship between stimulus and response, which can promote desired behaviours within an individual (Anindyarini, 2018). The personalized learning environment using AI tools caters to the pleasure of learners to comprehend new information (Karson, 2025). In addition, the AI tools analyze the speaking performance of learners to adjust content and difficulty levels, which align closely with the behaviourist principle (Bennett, 2025).

Socio-cultural Theory

Vygotsky (1978) states that cognitive development happens due to the influence of cultural and social factors. AI tools offer interactive and affordable language learning platforms where learners practice speech techniques in real time without stress or judgment of speaking to a human (Akram et al., 2021; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022; Chang et al., 2023).

Educational Technology Theories

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model was initially developed by Davis (1989) which is considered as a framework for assessing the users' acceptance and use of technology. The study (Coşkun & Aslan, 2021) explored English language learners' perceptions of using technology and its usefulness in examining AI-assisted speaking tools.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) predicts technology adoption by integrating other eight models such as Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Motivational Model (MM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), combined TAM & TPB, Model of PC Utilization (MPCU), Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). Zaim et al. (2024) emphasize the use of Generative AI in English language learning by assessing the performance expectancy and behavioural intention of teachers or learners to include AI tools in pedagogy with the help of the UTAUT model.

Connectivism

The theory of connectivism by Siemens (2005) emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge acquisition by integrating various sources of information across networks. The research (Asak & Asak, 2025) conducted in Nigeria confirms that integration of AI in education provides personalized, interactive and accessible learning experiences by creating an immersive learning environment.

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT)

The Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 2020) emphasizes the importance of preventing cognitive load among learners by optimizing the instructional design to enhance learning efficiency. Feng (2024) highlights the importance of AI-assisted language learning strategies that limit the cognitive load of the learners.



SAMR Model (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition)

Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, Redefinition (SAMR) model provides a framework for exploring the scope of technology integration in teaching and also a transformation in teaching and learning (Puentedura, 2013). Kohnke and Zou (2025) posit that the responsible use of AI in English language teaching promotes inclusive and innovative practices to ensure effective teaching.

TPACK Framework (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge)

The TPACK framework by Mishra and Koehler suggests the integration of technology, pedagogy and content knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2009). The findings of the study (Fatih & Bengü, 2024) provide insights to integrate AI technologies in teaching based on the pedagogy and content knowledge.

AI tools for Speaking

The advent of rapid AI-powered tools for educational purposes has led to numerous AI-based platforms in language pedagogy. The researchers present the following AI tools, which enhance the English-speaking skills of learners, and discuss the approaches or methods to integrate them into English language pedagogy.

ChatGPT (Dictate Mode)

The dictate mode of ChatGPT converts audio or speech into text. The learners receive instant feedback with corrections as well as explanations. However, phonological knowledge is required to learn pronunciation. Muhammed (2025) confirms that ChatGPT is one of the effective tools to enhance English speaking skills. The ChatGPT app has a user-friendly interface (Huang, 2024). The study (Kanoksilapatham & Takrudkaew, 2025) confirms that students gained grammatical and conversational knowledge, and students were confident that ChatGPT generates scripts with proper grammar and vocabulary use. ChatGPT dictate mode is freely available for mobile phone users.

ChatGPT (Voice Mode)

The voice mode of ChatGPT helps the learners to experience real-time speaking with improvement in pronunciation and fluency. ChatGPT voice mode significantly supports English language learners in improving their speaking skills focusing on other parameters of speaking such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary and grammar (Alexander Carrera Nuñez et al., 2025). ChatGPT's voice mode offers conversational writing support; however, it lacks scaffolding and structure, which give users the complete role in planning and composing writings on their own (Alaoui, Taheri, Peng, & Bigham, 2025). The learners have to tap on "headphone" icon at the bottom right side of the screen of ChatGPT homepage to access the voice feature (Huang, 2024). Currently, the voice mode icon is available in the ChatGPT Plus interface for GPT-4 or GPT-5 models, but it is not being used from the desktop/web version (OpenAI, 2025). The voice mode of ChatGPT serves as an excellent multilingual language learning tool. ChatGPT voice mode is freely available for mobile phone users, whereas policy changes are being implemented for desktop users.

Smalltalk2me

Smalltalk2me is an AI-powered speaking assistant that helps learners record and analyze their own speaking skills. Thus, Smalltalk2me enhances the speaking skills of English learners focusing on context-based vocabulary learning and fluency. Zhang, Wang and Cheng (2020) confirm in the study that AI-powered speaking tool like smalltalk2me brings objectivity and consistency in the evaluation process. According to the study conducted by Manggiasih et al., (2023b), the features of smalltalk2me are: -

- Provides ease of access and convenience in using the tool as per the requirements of the learners.
- Offers immediate feedback to the learners.
- Offers impartiality and consistency in the evaluation of language skills.
- Provides privacy and comfort to learn in their own space.



Whereas, certain limitations such as lack of human interactions, technical issues and pronunciation variations are being notified by learners. In addition, smalltalk2me offers a free plan with limited use. Manggiasih et al. (2023) conclude that Smalltalk2me supports innovative language proficiency evaluations with immediate feedback.

ELSA speak

The English Learning Speech Assistant (ELSA) was designed by Vu Van and Xavier Anguera in 2015. ELSA Speak provides an interactive and personalized learning experience, combining a motivating and fun approach. The speak application helps learners to practice pronunciation, starting from English words, phrases, and sentences, along with an interactive dictionary (Anggraini, 2022). The application offers instant feedback similar to other language AI's which enhances speaking proficiency. Hanna et al., (2022) highlight the role of AI speech tools in improving language learning in an impactful manner in the study. Similar to Smalltalk2me, ELSA Speak is freely available with limited features.

Google Translate

Google translate is used as a dictionary application. Vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation model is offered by Google translate to enhance fluency of English language learners. Google translate (Muzdalifah et al., 2020) functions as a supplementary speaking enhancement tool among English language learners. Google Translate offers students an accessible and immediate pronunciation model that can be used for enhancing speaking skills (Khoshima & Mozakka, 2017). In addition, the study (Gailea & Handayani, 2025) confirms that integration of Google Translate significantly improves pronunciation accuracy and helps students to comprehend commonly confused pronunciation. Unlike other AI-powered speech applications, Google Translate is completely free for users.

Duolingo

The Duolingo App is effective in increasing learners' English vocabulary. The learning materials

structured in the form of a gameplay makes it easier for beginners to start learning English at a basic level and increase levels and challenges step-by-step. Their proficiency steadily improves while fostering a positive impact on language performance (Nurhayati & Suryaman, 2024). The application incorporates several other features such as text, audio and visuals to produce learning materials. It enables learners to perform their tasks and enhance their skills in a comfortable environment. Duolingo learning happens at different levels ranging from basic to difficult levels (Fitria, Usman & Sahara, 2023). Most importantly, Duolingo offers flexibility in learning the English language (Niah & Pahmi, 2019). The basic form of Duolingo is free for all learners, whereas premium versions require payment.

Integration of AI tools into English Language Pedagogy

Learner-centered and technology-enhanced teaching methods probably support the integration of AI Tools into English language Pedagogy. These methods probably complement traditional pedagogy as transformation occurs gradually.

Flipped classroom with AI-support

In a flipped classroom model, learners are probably expected to engage with AI supported content such as lectures, digital readings or tutorials prior to attending class sessions. This engagement would ensure that all foundational knowledge acquisition occurs independently, in a self-paced personalized manner, thereby allowing classroom learning to process cognitive skills such as critical thinking, collaboration and authentic communication. A study by Huesca et al. (2024), found that incorporating ChatGPT into pre-class learning in a flipped strategy improved learner engagement and preparation, thus enabling deeper in-class activities.

Task-Based Language Teaching with AI

Task based language Teaching approach focuses on empowering tasks that reflect real-life communication such as role plays, problem solving and peer interaction. With AI support, these tasks can



be enhanced through tools like ChatGPT and ELSA Speak in providing learners with examples, guidance and quick corrections. A study shows that using AI in task based-learning activities increased student engagement, independence and proficiency in speaking and reading. The personalized learning and real-time feedback using both AI Tools and in the traditional classroom activities, promote Task based-learning more effectively and learner-centered (Huang, X., Wu, Y., & Dou, A., 2024).

Project-based Language Learning with AI

Project-based language learning involves learners in tasks to imbibe analytic and critical thinking when focusing on the completion of the activity. It is a learner-centered approach where the learner takes the autonomy to learn (Kokotsaki et al., 2016). Conducting seminars, role-plays and mock-interviews as part of project-based learning through the integration of AI tools perhaps enhance the pedagogy.

Gamification with AI tools

AI tools such as ELSA speak and Duolingo offer gamified techniques to practice language learning (Wu et al., 2024) which motivates learners to improve their language skills through interesting language learning games. Learning games to develop and narrate a story, to instruct and draw or design a product, to generate questions and organize quiz and so on probably allow learners to use language with AI support and motivate them to speak. Hence, gamified strategies in English language pedagogy contributes significantly with the integration of AI.

Conclusion

This study reviewed the role of AI tools in enhancing English speaking skills and explored the methods to integrate free or partially-free AI tools into the English language pedagogy of tertiary-level English language learners. The findings confirm that AI tools significantly support the English language speaking skills of tertiary-level learners. The paper reviewed the following AI tools such as ChatGPT (dictate mode), ChatGPT (voice mode), smalltalk2me, ELSA

speak, Google translate and Duolingo. These tools significantly influence the fluency, pronunciation, accent, grammar and overall speaking skill. In contrast, these AI tools are partially free and offer limited access to daily practice sessions for free.

In addition, the language learning theories and educational technology theories support the integration of AI tools into English language pedagogy. Flipped classroom with the support of AI and task-based language teaching with AI are considered as the suggested methods to integrate them in the pedagogical process. These methods enhance the engagement of the learners in the classroom through active participation and in an authentic speaking environment. This theoretical conceptual paper attempts to suggest the role of AI tools in English speaking skills, along with related theories and methods to integrate them in the pedagogy which paves the way for future empirical study.

Implications

These findings inform the possibilities to integrate AI tools to enhance English speaking skills of the tertiary-level learners with suitable methods for language pedagogy. However, the technological facilities or access to technology-based learning in tertiary-level environment is limited to classrooms with huge number of learners. Further, a closer attention to broader educational factors such as learner readiness, AI literacy and the societal constraints is required as they influence practical implementation and effectiveness of these tools in real world classroom settings. Correspondingly, professional development opportunities for teachers have to be explored to efficiently practice AI-integrated pedagogy. Finally, the curriculum development need to consider and encompass the different aspects of AI-integrated pedagogy in curriculum to practice them in tertiary-level educational setting.

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