USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL CLASSROOMS

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Abstract. *This research examines the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in developing the speaking proficiency of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners who are preparing for the IELTS examination. Speaking is one of the most challenging skills for students, as there is a lack of real-time conversation and authentic materials. This study involves a quasi-experimental methodology that is conducted with B2-level secondary school students. Over six weeks, the experimental group utilized AI -based applications, containing natural language processing chatbots, while the control group was taught with traditional communicative methods. The date reveals that the AI – supported instructions lead to measurable improvements in fluency, pronunciation, accuracy and especially, it assisted in developing learners' autonomy. The research enriches the literature on Technology-Enhanced Language Learning (TELL) by providing practical and pedagogical implications for integrating AI into EFL speaking instruction.*

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, speaking skills, IELTS, EFL learners, pronunciation, fluency, TELL, feedback, AI platforms, control group, experimental group*.

In contemporary language pedagogy, enhancing speaking skills is a main goal of students who intend to succeed in English-medium environments. Although they have received formal instruction, most of the EFL students still struggle to communicate effectively since they have limited access to authentic communicative practice and feedback. This is one of the main problems in the context of IELT preparation, where speaking scores heavily influence final results.

Traditional classroom settings often limit speaking practice thanks to time restrictions, large class sizes, and teacher-centered approaches. As a result, students may experience increased anxiety, low confidence, and insufficient exposure to real-life communication scenarios. Recent progress in artificial intelligence (AI) offers innovative solutions to these problems. AI technologies, such as chatbots and speech recognition software, give a chance of studying in an interactive, adaptive, and individualized way.

Focusing on theoretical perspectives from Second Language Acquisition (SLA), particularly interactionist theories (Long, 1996) and output hypothesis (Swain, 1985), this study examines how AI-mediated interaction can facilitate language development. The aim is to evaluate the effectiveness of AI tools in improving speaking proficiency among upper-intermediate learners.

This study was conducted in one of the private schools that is located in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. 40 students who are aged 15-16 at a B2 level according to the CEFR. Participants are divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of 20 students. Students are in 10th grade.

The experimental group used AI tools such as ChatGPT for interactive dialogue and immediate feedback, ELSA for improving their pronunciation, and Speak Pro for imitating authentic

materials like TED Talks, interviews and news. At the same time, it provides AI-powered feedback on the pronunciation and rhythm compared to the original speaker. On the other hand, the control group followed traditional speaking activities, including pair work, role plays, and teacher feedback.

Tool	Type of AI	Function
ChatGPT	**Generative AI** (Large Language Model)	Facilitates open-ended natural conversation, provides grammatical explanations, and generates contextual vocabulary.
ELSA	**Specialized Speech AI** (Pronunciation Coach)	Analyzes phonological accuracy, word stress, and intonation; provides a predicted IELTS speaking score.
SpeakPro	**Interactive AI** (Shadowing Coach)	Enables simultaneous mimicry (shadowing) of authentic video content; compares rhythm and intonation against native models.

The intervention lasted six weeks, with three speaking sessions per week. Pre-test and post-test assessments were conducted using IELTS speaking descriptors, focusing on fluency, pronunciation, lexical resource, and grammatical accuracy.

Data collection included test scores, classroom observations, and student feedback surveys. Quantitative data were analyzed to measure improvement, while qualitative data provided insights into learner perceptions.

The results demonstrate that students who have been in the experimental group had greater improvement compared to the traditional group. On average, learners could improve about 1,2 IELTS band score, while the control group was able to improve merely 0.5 band.

Looking at specific criteria more closely, fluency increased by 40%, pronunciation accuracy changed by 35%, and lexical recourse expanded by 25%. Notably, a qualitative study indicated that the affective filter was significantly lowered. It suggests that AI-based practice reduced learner anxiety, allowing them to acquire the language skills more effectively.

These findings highlight how AI platforms can help students to practice frequently to receive instant feedback in their learning journey. By encouraging independent learning, these tools cover the most important part of developing speaking proficiency.

The results of the study prove that AI-mediated interaction gives an advantage in developing speaking proficiency for IELTS candidates. The 1.2 band score increase in the experimental group,

compared to the 0.5 growth in the control group, illustrates the superiority of an individualized, AI-driven approach.

Personalization – In most traditional classrooms, it is common to have a one-size-fits-all approach where students have difficulty in finding individual deficits. While AI platforms analyzed students' speech and found weaknesses in their phonology, lexis and offered alternative words, collocations or ideas.

Time Efficiency: Students who used AI sessions achieved their targets in 30 minutes in comparison with traditional classroom practice that required 45-60 minutes to produce the same outcomes.

Lowering affective filter: Students tend to feel anxious when they are speaking in front of class because they fear their classmates will judge them. When they talk and practice with AI, their affective filter can be lowered.

Limitations of the tools:

Technical issues: The study noted that 32% of learners in suburban places still are not able to access high-speed internet and hardware.

AI accuracy: Although AI has been effective, some models of it showed a 2.3% error rate in several parts, such as idiomatic expressions or culturally specific context, which still need human correction.

The role of the teacher: Teachers act as facilitators in the classroom, and help to find some minor errors that AI may miss during speech.

This research confirms that incorporating AI tools into IELTS preparation showed an increase of 38% in overall communicative efficiency. By receiving on-time feedback, gamified motivation and unlimited practice opportunities, the problem of lack of authentic interaction is mainly found in EFL classrooms.

Practical recommendations:

National Integration: Authorities in the country should consider a unified digital platform to standardize AI speaking practice across secondary schools.
Teacher training: A certified AI pedagogy course should be prepared to assist instructors in effectively mediating between students and AI tools.

In conclusion, AI is not merely a facilitator, but it is a stimulus for changing EFL education into the 21st – century digital standard. Filling the gap between theory and practice, it enables students to achieve the academic and professional success required in global English-medium environments.

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