

THE IMPACT OF AI TOOLS ON SPEAKING SKILLS IN ONLINE EFL CLASSES

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Abstract

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly transformed modern education, especially in online learning environments. In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, AI-powered tools such as speech recognition systems, chatbots, and language learning applications provide new opportunities for improving students' speaking skills. This study investigates the impact of AI tools on the development of speaking skills in online EFL classes. The research examines how AI technologies influence learners' pronunciation, fluency, confidence, and overall communication abilities. A mixed-method research design was employed, involving surveys and experimental observation of university students participating in online English courses. The results indicate that the use of AI tools improves learners' speaking performance by providing instant feedback, personalized learning experiences, and increased opportunities for practice. However, the study also highlights certain limitations, including technological challenges and students' dependence on automated systems. The findings suggest that AI tools can be effective supplementary resources for enhancing speaking skills in online EFL education when used appropriately.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, EFL learning, speaking skills, online education, language technology

Introduction

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an essential component of modern educational technologies. AI-powered tools are increasingly used in various fields of education to support teaching and learning processes. In language learning, especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, AI technologies offer innovative opportunities for improving students' communication skills. Speaking is considered one of the most challenging language skills for EFL learners. Many students experience difficulties with pronunciation, fluency, and confidence when communicating in English. Traditional classroom environments sometimes provide limited opportunities for speaking practice, particularly when class sizes are large or when instruction is conducted online. The development of AI tools has introduced



new possibilities for overcoming these challenges. Technologies such as speech recognition systems, virtual assistants, and AI-based language learning applications allow learners to practice speaking independently and receive immediate feedback on their performance. These tools can simulate real-life conversations, analyze pronunciation accuracy, and provide personalized suggestions for improvement. Online learning environments, which became widespread during the COVID-19 pandemic, have further increased the importance of digital technologies in language education. AI tools integrated into online platforms can support students' speaking practice outside the classroom and encourage more active participation in virtual lessons. Despite the growing popularity of AI in education, questions remain regarding its effectiveness in improving speaking skills in EFL contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of AI tools on students' speaking development in online English classes. The research focuses on the following questions:

How do AI tools influence students' speaking skills in online EFL classes?
What benefits do students experience when using AI tools for speaking practice?
What challenges may arise when integrating AI technologies into online language learning?

Methods

This study adopted a mixed-method research design combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of AI tools in improving speaking skills in online EFL classes.

Participants The participants consisted of 50 university students enrolled in online English courses at higher education institutions. The students had intermediate English proficiency levels and were familiar with online learning platforms. Additionally, 8 English language instructors participated in the study to provide professional insights into the use of AI tools in language teaching.

Research Instruments

Several research instruments were used to collect data:

Questionnaires – Students completed surveys regarding their experiences using AI-based language learning tools and their perceptions of speaking improvement.

Online speaking assessments – Students' speaking performances were evaluated before and after using AI tools during the course.

Teacher interviews – Instructors were interviewed to gather qualitative data about the effectiveness and challenges of using AI in online classes.

Procedure



The research was conducted over a period of eight weeks. During this time, students used various AI-powered language learning tools integrated into their online classes. These tools included speech recognition software, AI conversation partners, and pronunciation analysis applications. Students practiced speaking activities regularly using these tools, and their progress was monitored through recorded speaking tasks and instructor evaluations.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the surveys and speaking assessments were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean scores and percentage changes in speaking performance. Qualitative data from teacher interviews and open-ended survey responses were analyzed through thematic analysis to identify common patterns and perceptions.

Results

The findings of the study demonstrate that AI tools had a positive impact on students' speaking skills in online EFL classes. Most participants reported that AI-based applications helped them practice speaking more frequently and improved their pronunciation accuracy. The speaking assessment results showed that students' fluency and confidence increased after eight weeks of using AI tools. Approximately 72% of students reported that speech recognition systems helped them identify pronunciation errors and correct them independently. Students also noted that AI conversation systems provided opportunities to practice speaking without the fear of making mistakes in front of classmates. This feature helped reduce anxiety and encouraged more active participation in speaking activities. Teachers involved in the study observed that students became more motivated and engaged when AI tools were integrated into the online learning environment. Many students practiced speaking outside scheduled class hours, which increased their exposure to English communication.

However, several challenges were also identified. Some students experienced technical difficulties related to internet connectivity and software limitations. In addition, teachers emphasized that AI tools cannot fully replace human interaction in language learning.

Discussion

The results of this study confirm that AI technologies can significantly support the development of speaking skills in online EFL classes. One of the key advantages of AI tools is the ability to provide immediate feedback on pronunciation and speech



patterns. This allows students to identify mistakes and improve their speaking accuracy in real time. Another important benefit is the opportunity for personalized learning. AI systems can adapt to learners' proficiency levels and provide customized exercises based on their performance. This feature enables students to practice speaking at their own pace and focus on specific areas that require improvement. Furthermore, AI tools increase students' motivation and engagement in online language learning. The interactive nature of AI applications encourages learners to participate actively in speaking activities and practice more frequently. Despite these advantages, it is important to recognize the limitations of AI-based learning tools. Technology cannot fully replicate the complexity of human communication, including emotional expression, cultural context, and spontaneous conversation. Therefore, AI should be considered a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for traditional teaching methods. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students on how to use AI technologies effectively and integrating them into meaningful learning activities.

Conclusion

This study explored the impact of AI tools on speaking skills in online EFL classes. The findings indicate that AI technologies can significantly enhance students' pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in speaking English. AI-based tools provide valuable opportunities for independent practice, immediate feedback, and personalized learning experiences. These features make them particularly useful in online learning environments where traditional speaking practice may be limited. However, the study also highlights the importance of balancing technological tools with human interaction in language education. Teachers should integrate AI technologies carefully and use them as supportive resources rather than replacements for classroom communication. Future research may examine the long-term effects of AI-assisted language learning and explore how different types of AI tools influence various aspects of language proficiency.

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