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Enhancing EFL Learners' Speaking Skills through AI-Powered Tools: A Quantitative Approach

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Abstract

AI-powered tools refer to technology-enhanced applications that utilize artificial intelligence to improve language learning through, real-time, and personalized support. Although tools such as ChatGPT, Elsa Speak, Duolingo, and Natural Reader are increasingly integrated into global education systems, their use remains underexplored in EFL contexts across the Kurdistan Region, where traditional teacher-centered approaches still dominate and often limit students' speaking opportunities, engagement, and confidence. This study investigates the role of AI applications in enhancing English-speaking skills among Kurdish EFL university students. It follows a quantitative approach through a closed-ended, five-point Likert sale questionnaire administered to 200 fourth-year English language students from three colleges at Salahaddin University-Erbil during the 2024-2025 academic year. The tool's reliability was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, and data were analyzed using SPSS (version30). Findings reveal that AI tools significantly aid learners in improving pronunciation, fluency, and self-confidence through real-time feedback and simulated conversation. Students found these tools effective in overcoming anxiety and boosting motivation, especially in contexts with limited natural interaction. Nonetheless, participants noted challenges, including limited digital access, lack of curricular integration, and inadequate student training. Additionally, the use of technology was found to increase student motivation and engagement during lessons, contributing to a more interactive and focused classroom environment. The study concludes that AI integration can bridge the gap between theoretical understanding and practical speaking ability, creating a more dynamic and student-centered learning experience.

Keywords:

Artificial Intelligence (AI), EFL Learners, Speaking Skills, Language Learning Technology, Confidence.

1. Introduction

AI has impacted language learning in education in the past several years widely and left a remarkable mark on it. The learning process of a foreign language traditionally comprises of four main skills: Receptive skills, like Listening, reading, and productive skills, writing and speaking. Speaking is found to be the most challenged one for EFL learners to improve and caused considerable frustration and difficulty. Indeed, its true especially in circumstances which learners don't have the opportunity to learn the language from native speakers or practice speaking in natural life contexts and situations. Many English language classes focus too much on grammar rules and teacher-led lessons without giving students timely corrections or chance to practice their speaking. Therefore, learners understand the language theoretically but cannot employ it practically in real-life conversations.

This is where the usage of AI in teaching and learning can be utilized as a solution to tackle these challenges. Several apps like ChatGPT, Duolingo, Elsa Speak, Natural Reader and Chatbots provide learners with real life customized assessments and real time feedback as well as the usage of language in real life contexts. Moreover, these applications offer real life like experience of actually conversing with an interlocutor and help learners to improve their pronunciation, fluency and accuracy. Even though AI tools are now easy to access and widely used in education all around the world, some important areas-such as Kurdistan region of Iraq have not been studied enough. In this region, it is not fully known how these tools are viewed by the teachers and students to enhance speaking English skills.

This research scrutinizes the challenges that students face when it comes to improve their speaking skills as well as the psychological aspects of AI assisted-learning such as learner motivation, self-confidence and speaking anxiety. Consequently, the findings of this research shed-lights on the importance of AI and advanced technologies to support divers teaching modalities to improve EFL learning speaking skills by fostering a more engaging and effective education experience.

2. History of AI

Artificial Intelligence AI has become a cornerstone in various sectors, particularly in education, where it is leveraged to elevate language learning. AI-driven mobile applications equip learners with opportunities to practice and refine their English-speaking skills, fostering personalized feedback and interactive learning experiences. The term "Artificial intelligence" (AI) was first introduced by John McCarthy during the Dartmouth conference in 1956(Benko& Sik Lanyi,2011, pp. 1759-1762). Ever since, AI has undergone substantial advancements, now encompassing applications such as natural language processing, speech recognition, and conversational agents- each holding significant potential for English as a foreign Language (EFL) education.

One of the crucial language skills is speaking which serves as the primary medium for communication, empowering learners to articulate ideas, convey emotions, and orchestrate in social interactions. Speaking differs from other language skills like reading and writing as it requires immediate thinking and real-time engagement in conversation (Kuiper et al., 2017, pp.1-24) proficiency and strong speaking abilities enhance both linguistic and communication skills, assist learners succeed in academic and professional environment. Though, EFL learners frequently face several challenges in classroom environment. One major issue is the limited exposure to the authentic language input, which restricts their development of natural fluency and accurate pronunciation. While AI-powered tools can deliver instant speech recognition and corrective feedback, traditional classroom instruction fail to provide enough practice for EFL learners to engage in spontaneous conversations. Moreover, many students experience speaking anxiety and fear of errors, discouraging them from fully engaging in discussions-particularly in large or mixed ability classes (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). Moreover, learners' progression may slow due to a lack of comprehensive individualized feedback from instructors, as teachers often do not have adequate time to evaluate and provide corrective feedback on student's

pronunciation, grammar, or fluency errors. Lastly, in conventional techniques of teaching, accuracy is placed above fluency, resulting in drills on grammar and vocabulary instead of real-life communicative activities which are vital for nurturing learners into confident and competent speakers (Rai,2024 &Roser,2022).

To address these challenges, integrating AI into language learning offers unique solutions for powered tools that can simulate actual conversation, provide immediate feedback, and tailor the learning processes to the needs of each learner. These technologies build on classroom work by addressing critical issues such as absence of real voice normalization, speech related anxiety, and scarce personalized attention. Remodeling of traditional teaching practices brought by AI in education has been executed through AI chatbots, virtual aids, and speech recognition programs which provide precise assessment of pronunciation, grammar, and fluency.

These technologies create an enriched learning environment by enabling students to participate in interactive dialogues, obtain instant corrective feedback, and monitor their developmental progress. Moreover, innovations in machine learning and natural language processing have empowered AI systems to deliver automated error identification, real-time speech analysis, and personalized learning approaches. AI-driven solutions-including conversational chatbots-offer simulated speaking practice, which helps alleviate learner anxiety while promoting linguistic confidence (Abu Shawar, 2017, pp.615-625; Kumar,2021, pp.1-28). Studies also demonstrate that mobile-based applications (MBAs) significantly boost EFL learners' motivation and participation through flexible, interactive learning modules (Pham et al. 2018; Viberg & Gronlund,2012; Lei et al.2022).

While Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers valuable support in EFL learning, it also presents several significant drawbacks. One major concern is the lack of human interaction and emotional connection, which AI cannot replicate. Human teachers provide empathy, motivation, and culturally nuanced explanations that are essential for language acquisition—capabilities AI tools still lack (Liu, 2023, p. 3025; Smith & Johnson, 2022, p. 45). Additionally, AI often struggles to interpret idiomatic expressions, cultural references, and emotional tones, making it difficult for learners to develop communicative competence beyond basic grammar and vocabulary (Garcia & Lee, 2023, p. 203). Technical limitations also hinder learning, particularly with speech recognition systems that misinterpret accents or dialects, leading to incorrect feedback and learner frustration (Nguyen, 2021, p. 134). Moreover, privacy concerns arise when AI-driven platforms collect and store personal data without transparent safeguards (White, 2021, p. 145). Finally, over-reliance on AI tools for translation or grammar correction can reduce learners' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, potentially weakening their long-term language development (Harris, 2023, p. 67). These limitations suggest that while AI can enhance certain aspects of language learning, it should complement—not replace—human instruction.

3. AI tools

ChatGPT feels almost like chatting with a friend. It makes conversations easy and real, which is perfect for practicing new languages and it is designed to develop speaking. ChatGPT understands context really well, lifting the quality of conversations, especially when learning languages (Zhang & Dafoe, 2023, p. 77).

Chatbots are smart programs that pretend to talk like humans through text or voice. For learners learning English as a Foreign Language, these chatbots create an environment free of fear and anxiety to practice speaking more often, getting people to feel more at ease with the language (Bibauw, François, & Desmet, 2019, p. 81).

Duolingo is a fun and gamified app for learning new languages and changes the exercises based on your progress. It really helps boost your speaking skills by making you repeat sentences and respond using your voice, so you begin to sound more natural (Loewen et al., 2020, p. 104).

ELSA Speak (English Language Speech Assistant) is a mobile app focused on helping you improve your English accent. It uses speech recognition to quickly give feedback on your pronunciation, tone, and fluency (Nguyen et al., 2021, p. 235).
Natural Reader is software that reads text aloud with voices that sound almost human. For those learning languages, this type of text-to-speech software is great for bettering listening skills and pronunciation by allowing users to hear and then repeat words and sentences (Kerr, 2016, p. 54).

4- Research Gap

The present study differs significantly from earlier researches in several key ways. Unlike studies that focused on a single AI tool using experimental methods, this research adopts a Quantitative Approach to examine the real-world integration of multiple AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Duolingo, ELSA Speak, Natural Reader, and Chatbots) in EFL classrooms. It uniquely explores both teacher and student perceptions, along with institutional challenges, areas that have been largely overlooked. Moreover, the study is conducted in a university-level EFL context, offering insights that go beyond the secondary or preparatory education settings typically examined.

5- Value of the Study

This study is significant as it explores how AI tools can effectively enhance EFL learners' speaking skills- a traditionally challenging area- by offering personalized, interactive, and feedback-rich learning experiences. It highlights both the benefits and challenges of using tools like ELSA Speak, ChatGPT, Natural Reader, Chatbots, and Duolingo in real classroom contexts. Ultimately, the research provides practical insights and strategies to help educators integrate AI into speaking instruction, aligning with modern educational needs.

6. Methodology and Data Collection

6.1 Research Design

The present study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the effectiveness of AI tools in enhancing EFL learners' speaking skills. This design was chosen due to its ability to combine the strengths of both paradigms, providing a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the research problem (Creswell et al., 2018, p. 23).
A mixed-methods approach involves the collection, analysis, and integration of both numerical (quantitative) and narrative (qualitative) data within a single study. This approach enables researchers to explore research questions from multiple dimensions, offering a more holistic view of a phenomenon under investigation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011, pp. 285–286). It not only allows for the measurement of trends and relationships but also uncovers deeper insights into the experiences, attitudes, and perceptions of participants.

6.2 Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following questions:
1. What are the perceptions of EFL students regarding the usage of AI tools to enhance their speaking skills?
2. What challenges do EFL students face in using AI to improve their speaking skills?

6.3 Aims of the Study

This study aims at:
1. EFL student's perceptions of the usage of AI tools in enhancing their speaking skills.
2. To identify the challenges EFL students face in using AI tools to improve their speaking skills.

6.4 The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. EFL students perceive AI tools as effective in improving their speaking skills by providing interactive and personalized learning experiences.
2. EFL students face challenges such as technological literacy, access to resources, and unfamiliarity with AI tools when using them to improve speaking skills.

6.5 Study Samples

The study involved fourth-stage university students and the participants number was 200 students from Salahaddin University participated in the questionnaire. The sample included 88 male (44%) and 112 female (56%) students from the Colleges of Education, Languages, and Basic Education. In purposive sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon (Creswell& Creswell,2018, p.148). They were selected using a purposeful sampling method based on variables such as gender, age, and academic background.

6.6 Limitation of the Study

This study is implemented on the fourth-year students at English Language Department of College of (Education, basic, and language)/ Salahaddin University-Erbil in order to investigate their perceptions. The whole population of students was (300), whereas the sample was (200) students in the academic year (2024-2025). The selection of sample is done on the basis that, first, Communication and conversation lectures are studied in the English Language Departments. Second, it is taught in English language, unlike the other departments within the college. Thirdly, 4th stage are the most appropriate group to provide reliable and convincing feedback about the teachers, given their experience. Moreover, this study will also investigate the perceptions of (33) EFL teachers including the head of the English Language Department/ College of Education. The study focuses on the utilization of AI tools to enhance EFL learners' speaking skills. Specifically, it investigates the effectiveness of various AI Apps, such as speech recognition, conversational agents, and pronunciation feedback tools, in improving learners' fluency, accuracy, and confidence in spoken English. The study narrows its focus to university-level EFL learners, ensuring that findings are relevant to higher education contexts.

6.7 The Study Tool

To achieve the aims of the study, a questionnaire consisting of two parts was administered to fourth-year students at the English Language department in the colleges of Education, Basic Education, and Language at SUE henceforth Erbil. The questionnaire comprises two sections: the first part collects participants demographical data, while the second part focuses on students' perceptions regarding the questionnaire items. It includes 27 five-point Likert scale items to indicate the participants' extent of agreement with each item [coded as (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neutral, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree] for students, organized into two domains, each aligned with the study's aims and research questions. The questionnaire was distributed among the students via a Google forms link through their Viber (Version 25.0.0), Messenger (Version 501.2), and Telegram (Version 11.9) groups.

6.8 The Ethicality of the Questionnaire

To avoid ethical issues, a cover letter was presented along with the questionnaire in which the purpose of the questionnaire was clarified for the participants. The cover letter informed the participants that their identities would remain anonymous and their responses would be used for research purposes only. The same information was verbally conveyed to the participants as well.

6.9 The Validity of the Questionnaire

To ensure its face validity and content validity, the constructed questionnaire was submitted to a panel nine jury members who were experts in the fields of English language teaching, Applied Linguistics, and/or Linguistics. They reviewed the content of the questionnaire and the suitability of its items. Based on their evaluation, they provided feedback and remarks. Furthermore, they made several deletions, additions, and modifications. A panel of nine reviewers also suggested linguistic improvements to make the questionnaire more

comprehensible and better aligned with the study's aims.

7.0 The Reliability of the Questionnaire

Regarding the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was used since it is a widely method in identifying the reliability of the items within a questionnaire. Thus, the data from the questionnaire were analyzed via Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS, version 30). The result of the internal consistency of the items was computed as 0.83, which is a highly reliable value. The result signifies good internal consistency among the items of the questionnaire.

N	Name	Academic Title	Specialty
1	Dr. Himdad A. Muhammad	Professor	Linguistics
2	Dr. Nada Abbas	Assistant Professor	Applied Linguistics
3	Dr. Kawa Sherwani	Professor	Linguistics (Discourse Analysis)
4	Dr. Salam Hakeem	Assistant Professor	Linguistics
5	Dr. Rozhgar Jalal	Assistant Professor	Applied Linguistics
6	Dr. Hewa Ali Faqerasool	Lecturer	Applied Linguistics
7	Dr. Rebin Azeez	Assistant Professor	Applied Linguistics
8	Dr. Parween Kawther	Assistant Professor	Applied Linguistics
9	Dr. Muhammed Qadir	Assistant Professor	Sociolinguistics

8. Results and Discussion

To address the research questions, the results obtained from the study were first presented, then analyzed and discussed. Accordingly, the data were organized into tables to display the statistical mean of each item, along with the percentage distribution for each option on the Likert scale, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' responses regarding the effectiveness of AI tools in enhancing EFL learners speaking skills.

Items	Responses	Mean	Frequency by Percentage				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I believe Al tools can significantly enhance speaking skills	198	4.00	2 (1)	11 (5.5)	39 (19.6)	79 (39.7)	67 (33.7)
2. I find Al tools easy to use for improving my speaking skills.	199	3.96	1 (0.5)	14 (7)	35 (17.6)	91 (45.7)	58 (29.1)
3. Al-based speaking exercises help me build confidence in my spoken English.	199	3.77	9 (4.5)	8 (4)	47 (23.6)	91 (45.7)	44 (22.1)
4. Al tools make it easier to identify and correct my pronunciation mistakes.	199	3.76	5 (2.5)	24 (12.1)	40 (20.1)	75 (37.7)	55 (27.6)
5. I feel motivated to practice speaking more often when using Al-based tools.	199	3.75	4 (2)	17 (8.5)	58 (29.1)	66 (33.2)	54 (27.1)

6. Al tools effectively simulate real-life conversational practice.	199	3.68	6 (3)	22 (11.1)	45 (22.6)	83 (41.7)	43 (21.6)
7. The use of Al in speaking practice aligns with my learning preferences.	199	3.64	4 (2)	16 (8)	50 (29.6)	89 (44.7)	31 (15.6)
8. Al tools provide personalized suggestions for improving my speaking skills.	198	3.82	4 (2)	16 (8)	38 (19.1)	93 (46.7)	47 (23.6)
9. Al tools provide useful feedback to improve my speaking skills.	199	3.80	2 (1)	18 (9)	46 (23.1)	85 (42.7)	48 (24.1)
10. Using online Al tools makes practicing speaking more engaging and interactive.	198	3.91	1 (0.5)	13 (6.5)	47 (23.6)	79 (39.7)	58 (29.1)
11. I feel more comfortable practicing speaking with AI tools than with a teacher or peers.	199	3.60	10 (5)	33 (16.6)	38 (19.1)	64 (32.2)	54 (27.1)
12. I find AI-based speaking exercises more enjoyable than traditional speaking practice methods.	199	3.57	8 (4)	31 (15.6)	41 (20.6)	77 (38.7)	42 (21.1)
13. AI tools expose me to new vocabulary and phrases that improve my speaking fluency.	199	3.95	3 (1.5)	14 (7)	39 (19.6)	76 (38.2)	67 (33.7)
14. I find that AI tools create opportunities to practice speaking in different contexts (e.g., formal and informal).	199	3.89	3 (1.5)	15 (7.5)	43 (21.6)	78 (39.2)	60 (30.2)
15. I think that AI does not have any positive impact on improving my speaking skill.	199	2.45	50 (25.1)	69 (34.7)	35 (17.6)	31 (15.6)	14 (7)
Valid N	**188**						

To respond to the first research question (*What are the perceptions of EFL students' regarding the use of AI tools in improving their speaking skills?*), items 1 to 15 were analyzed because they explore students' perceptions of how AI tools help them in Boosting Speaking Skills.

There were 200 people who took part in the survey, with more females than males. Out of the total, 112 were females (55.8%) while there were 88 males (44.2%). So, this means there were a few more women in the group. Having both women and men nearly equally makes the study more valuable. It helps to include different views and experiences when talking about using AI tools to improve English-speaking skills. This mix also allows for future gender comparisons in the analysis.

When diving into how English, as a Foreign Language (EF), learners use AI tools to boost their speaking skills, a study with 200 participants revealed some eye-catching results. ChatGPT came out on top, being chosen by 83 people (41.7%), mainly because it is fantastic for practicing conversations. Both Duolingo and Natural Reader were favorites for 23 people each (11.1%). Meanwhile, 20 learners (10.1%) preferred ELSA, and another 18 (9.0%) mentioned using

various chatbots. Interestingly, 33 respondents (16.6%) picked "Others," pointing to a range of different tools being employed. Only one person (0.5%) said they didn't use any AI tools at all. These findings highlight the growing importance of AI in language learning, with ChatGPT leading the way due to its user-friendly and engaging nature for practice. The diverse mix of tools, especially the "Others" category, suggests there is room for trying out new options. Overall, the results indicate that using a combination of AI tools will help learners improve their speaking skills more effectively.

The survey revealed that the first question got the highest average score (Mean = 4.00). Most students (73%) agreed or strongly agreed that AI tools helped their speaking skills. This shows that students believe AI is a good way to improve their communication abilities. Many classrooms now include these AI tools alongside traditional methods.

The second question (Mean = 3.96) asked if these tools were easy to use. About 74.8% of students said they were easy to navigate. This is important because if a tool is simple, more students will use it regularly, even if they arent tech -savvy.

For the third question (Mean = 3.77), we asked if using AI exercises made them more confident speakers. About 67.8% felt more confident, suggesting that AI offers a safe space to practice without fear of being judged. This is very helpful for students who are nervous about speaking.

The fourth question (Mean = 3.76) asked if AI helps students correct their pronunciation mistakes. Although 65.3% agreed, some (14.6%) disagreed. This indicates that while many found the feedback useful, some thought AI might not always catch their pronunciation issues correctly. Improving this feature could make AI tools better for different speaking accents.

The fifth question (Mean = 3.75) asked if AI tools motivated students to practice speaking. About 60.3% felt more motivated. Motivation is key for learning a language, and it seems like the interactive nature of AI tools keeps students engaged and practicing.

Question six (Mean = 3.68) focused on whether AI could create real-life speaking scenarios. About 63.3% agreed while 24.3% felt neutral. This means that while AI can imitate real conversations, it may sometimes lack the spontaneity and depth of human interactions, making it feel less natural.

The seventh question (Mean = 3.64) asked how well AI tools matched individual learning styles. Many students responded neutrally (29.6%). This shows that while some students found AI tools matched their learning preferences, others didnt. This highlights the need for more customizable AI tools to fit different learning styles.

The eighth question (Mean = 3.82) asked if AI tools gave personalized feedback. About 70.3% of students said yes, indicating that personalized help is a big plus for AI. It allows students to focus on weak points, and many appreciated this feature.

In the ninth question (Mean = 3.80), 66.8% of students said they found the feedback from AI helpful in improving their speaking skills. Good feedback is crucial for language learning and it looks like AI is doing a good job by offering timely and focused suggestions.

The tenth question (Mean = 3.91) asked if AI tools made speaking practice more fun. About 68.8% of students thought so. Keeping practice fun is important because it helps students remain consistent in their learning.

On the other hand, the eleventh question (Mean = 3.60) showed mixed feelings about whether students felt more comfortable speaking to an AI versus a human. While 59.3% felt more comfortable with AI, some (21.6%) didn’t. This shows that although AI offers a no-judgment space, some miss the emotional feedback and comfort of human interaction.

The twelfth question (Mean = 3.57) asked if students enjoyed using AI tools overall. Though 57.3% said yes, the mean score was lower compared to other questions, and more students responded neutrally (30.3%). This indicates that while students see practical benefits, they might not enjoy AI tools as much as traditional methods or face-to-face communication.

The thirteenth question (Mean = 3.95) asked whether AI tools help students learn new vocabulary and phrases that support fluency. A strong 71.9% agreed or strongly agreed, while only 8.5% disagreed. This shows that most students believe AI introduces helpful language for

speaking. The average score is one of the highest, meaning students value how AI boosts their word choices and speaking flow. Although opinions vary slightly, the overall view is clearly positive.

The fourteenth question (Mean = 3.89) looked at whether AI tools help students speak in different settings—like formal or casual conversations. About 69.4% agreed, and only 9% disagreed. This suggests most students find AI useful for practicing language in different situations, preparing them for real-life communication. However, 21.6% were neutral, possibly because some AI tools may not fully simulate diverse speaking contexts. Still, the results show strong support for AI's flexibility in speaking practice.

Finally, the fifteenth question (Mean = 2.45) was worded negatively, saying that AI does not improve speaking skills. Most students (59.8%) disagreed with this statement, which means they do believe AI is helpful. However, 22.6% agreed or strongly agreed, showing that some students are still unsure about the benefits. This item had the widest range of opinions (SD = 1.22), suggesting mixed experiences. It points to the need for better integration and support to help all students benefit from AI.

Overall, as research I can obviously see, the findings show that EFL students hold positive perceptions of AI tools for improving speaking skills, especially due to their ease of use, personalized feedback, and ability to boost confidence and motivation. ChatGPT was the most preferred tool. However, some students were neutral about enjoyment, comfort, and learning style compatibility, suggesting that AI should complement—not replace—human interaction. These results highlight AI's growing role in language learning while pointing to areas needing improvement, such as emotional engagement and adaptability.

To address the research questions, the results obtained from the study were first presented, then analyzed and discussed. Accordingly, the data were organized into tables to display the statistical mean of each item, along with the percentage distribution for each option on the Likert scale, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Students' responses regarding the challenges that EFL learners face in using AI tools to improve their speaking skills.

Items	Responses	Mean	Frequency by Percentage				
			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is difficult to use Al tools effectively for speaking practice.	196	3.45	5 (2.5)	50 (25.1)	42 (21.1)	50 (25.1)	49 (24.6)
2. Al tools do not provide feedback that is clear or helpful for improving speaking skills.	198	3.16	15 (7.5)	49 (24.6)	47 (23.6)	64 (32.2)	23 (11.6)
3. Al-based speaking exercises can feel impersonal and less engaging.	198	3.27	9 (4.5)	41 (20.6)	61 (30.7)	62 (31.2)	25 (12.6)
4. I face technical issues (e.g., poor internet connection, device limitations) when using Al tools.	198	3.30	12 (6)	39 (19.6)	59 (29.6)	54 (27.1)	34 (17.1)

5. Al tools are not tailored to my specific needs as an EFL learner.	198	3.15	9 (4.5)	42 (21.1)	76 (38.2)	52 (26.1)	19 (9.5)
6. Using Al for speaking practice feels less motivating compared to practicing with a teacher or peers.	198	3.47	9 (4.5)	37 (18.6)	42 (21.1)	72 (36.2)	38 (19.1)
7. The cost of accessing high-quality AI tools, including premium subscriptions required for advanced features, is a barrier that limits my ability to fully utilize them.	198	3.52	11 (5.5)	22 (11.1)	61 (30.7)	61 (30.7)	43 (21.6)
8. Al tools provide limited opportunities for authentic conversational practice.	196	3.38	12 (6)	31 (15.6)	58 (29.1)	61 (30.7)	34 (17.1)
9. AI tools often fail to adapt to my progress, continuing to provide tasks that are either too easy or too difficult.	198	3.22	16 (8)	38 (19.1)	57 (28.6)	60 (30.2)	27 (13.6)
10. The lack of human interaction in AI-based practice makes it difficult to build conversational fluency.	198	3.40	12 (6)	33 (16.6)	53 (26.6)	63 (31.7)	37 (18.6)
11. AI-based speaking exercises do not prepare me for specific real-world contexts, like job interviews or academic discussions.	198	3.21	17 (8.5)	36 (18.1)	58 (29.1)	62 (31.2)	25 (12.6)
12. AI tools do not understand emotions or respond with empathy, making them less helpful for real communication practice.	196	3.44	17 (8.5)	24 (12.1)	48 (24.1)	69 (34.7)	38 (19.1)
Valid N	**188**						

To answer the second research question (*What challenges do EFL students face in using AI to improve their speaking skills?*), items 1 to 12 in the questionnaire were analyzed to explore the various obstacles students encounter when using AI-based tools for speaking practice.

Item 1 examines students' overall difficulty using AI for speaking practice. With a mean score of 3.45, the item sits near the upper end of the "Low Perception" category but reflects a moderate challenge. Nearly half of the students (49.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that using AI is difficult, indicating that a considerable portion of learners struggle with functionality or usability. In contrast, 27.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that some students find AI tools manageable. The standard deviation of 1.19 signals a wide range of experiences. While the perception level is classified as "low," the high agreement rate highlights a clear need to improve usability and offer better guidance for learners using AI to practice speaking.

Item 2 focuses on the clarity and usefulness of AI-generated feedback. The mean score of 3.16, though falling within the low perception range, points to a significant concern for many students. About 43.8% reported that AI feedback lacks clarity or is not helpful, which can hinder

learning progress. Meanwhile, 32.1% disagreed, suggesting positive experiences with some platforms. A notable 23.6% remained neutral, possibly due to inconsistent feedback quality or limited exposure to advanced AI features. The variation in responses (SD = 1.15) reflects the need for clearer and more personalized feedback mechanisms.

Item 3 assesses whether AI-based tasks feel impersonal or unengaging. The mean score of 3.27 shows that a moderate number of students (43.8%) perceive AI speaking activities as lacking emotional connection, which could negatively affect motivation. Only 25.1% disagreed, while a relatively high 30.7% were neutral, indicating mixed feelings. The moderate standard deviation (1.07) suggests diverse experiences. Overall, this item suggests that the lack of human interaction in AI practice may reduce learners' engagement and enthusiasm.

Item 4 addresses technical issues, with a mean score of 3.30. While classified as “low perception,” the responses reveal a moderate concern. About 44.2% of students indicated they experience technical problems such as poor connectivity or outdated devices, which can disrupt learning. In contrast, 25.6% did not face such issues. The neutral group (29.6%) reflects students with inconsistent access or experiences across different environments. This item highlights the importance of reliable infrastructure and access to compatible devices.

Item 5 explores the level of personalization offered by AI tools. The mean score of 3.15 suggests that many students (35.6%) feel AI tools do not adapt to their individual learning needs. While a quarter of the students (25.6%) disagreed, a significant 38.2% remained neutral, which may reflect unfamiliarity with adaptive learning features or exposure to generic platforms. The moderate variation in responses (SD = 1.01) indicates inconsistent user satisfaction with AI personalization.

Item 6 reveals that motivation is affected when using AI compared to human interaction. With a mean of 3.47, it shows the highest challenge level in the set. A combined 55.3% of students reported that they feel less motivated when practicing with AI tools than with peers or teachers. This suggests that while AI may support language learning, it does not replace the motivational benefits of social interaction. The moderate disagreement (23.1%) and neutral responses (21.1%) reflect the need to enhance AI's interactive and motivational features.

Item 7 investigates financial barriers, with a mean of 3.52. More than half (52.3%) of the students acknowledged that cost is a challenge, indicating that access to advanced AI tools may not be equitable. Only 16.6% disagreed, and 30.7% remained neutral, possibly due to varying access to free and paid tools. This item reveals that affordability is a real concern and may prevent students from taking full advantage of AI-based speaking resources.

Item 8 considers the authenticity of AI-based conversations. The mean score of 3.38 suggests a moderate concern. Around 47.8% of students agreed that AI conversations feel artificial or unrealistic, which could affect their communicative competence. On the other hand, 21.6% disagreed, and 29.1% remained neutral, pointing to differing expectations or tool familiarity. The result highlights the need for more realistic, contextually rich AI speaking simulations.

Item 9 again touches on adaptivity, focusing on whether AI scales its content according to learner progress. With a mean score of 3.22, the item suggests that 43.8% of students feel AI does not adjust to their development level. Only 27.1% disagreed, and 28.6% were neutral. These findings reinforce earlier observations that personalization and dynamic response are limited in many AI tools, which can affect learner progress and engagement.

Item 10 examines whether the absence of human interaction limits fluency development. The mean score of 3.40 shows that over half of the students (50.3%) agree, reinforcing the idea that AI alone cannot fully substitute real-life conversations. A quarter of students (22.6%) disagreed, and 26.6% were undecided. This item underscores the importance of integrating AI with human interaction to develop authentic communicative fluency.

Item 11 addresses the practical relevance of AI tasks to real-world speaking situations. With a mean of 3.21, 43.8% of students agreed that AI tools do not prepare them adequately for practical contexts. A significant neutral response (29.1%) and moderate disagreement (26.6%)

suggest varied experiences. This finding highlights a need for AI tools to include more context-specific tasks aligned with learners' daily and academic needs.

Item 12 (mean = 3.44) also reflects moderate concern. A high percentage of students report that AI exercises fail to provide rich communicative opportunities. Although the perception category remains "low," the score is close to the middle of the scale, indicating an area for improvement. Enhancing the communicative richness of AI tasks could help boost learners' confidence and fluency.

Overall, as researcher I have clearly noticed, the results reveal that while EFL students generally perceive AI tools as helpful, they also face several moderate yet consistent challenges. These include usability issues, lack of personalization, limited motivation compared to human interaction, financial constraints, and the artificial nature of AI conversations. Although the overall perception scores are categorized as "low," the high rates of agreement on many items suggest these barriers are real and impactful. Therefore, for AI tools to be more effective in improving speaking skills, they must be more adaptive, interactive, affordable, and contextually relevant.

9. Conclusion

To conclude, this study explored the effectiveness of AI-powered tools in enhancing the English-speaking skills of EFL learners at Salahaddin University-Erbil. The mixed-methods findings revealed that artificial intelligence applications such as ChatGPT, Elsa Speak, Duolingo, and Chatbots significantly contribute to improving students' pronunciation, fluency, motivation, and self-confidence through real-time feedback, simulated interactions, and personalized learning experiences. Students' responses emphasized the pedagogical value of these technologies in overcoming key barriers to speaking proficiency, such as anxiety, lack of practice opportunities, and limited exposure to authentic language input.

Moreover, the study highlighted that AI tools positively impact learner engagement and autonomy by offering flexible and adaptive platforms for language practice beyond the classroom. Despite the benefits, some challenges persist, including limited access to technology, lack of structured curriculum integration, and insufficient student training in AI and technology Apps.

Given these outcomes, qualitative research is perfect for delving into how AI tools can help improve speaking skills. This type of study thoroughly examines into the experiences, thoughts, and hurdles faced by learners and teachers. It shows how and why these AI tools affect speaking growth - something numbers alone cannot show. Future research can mix different methods, look at specific tools, check out long-term effects, or take into account cultural and educational settings.

To sum up, the use of AI in EFL speaking classes presents a promising avenue for bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and communicative competence. Thoughtful implementation can transform traditional classrooms into interactive, personalized spaces that support learners in becoming more fluent, confident, and engaged English speakers.

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بەرزکردنەوەی تواناکانی قسەکردنی فێرخوازانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانییکی بیانی لە ڕێگەی ئامرازە بەهێزکراوەکانی ژیری دەستکرد : لێکۆڵینەوەیەکی وەسفی

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پوختە

ئەوئامرازانەی کەلەلایەن زیرەکی دەستکردەوە کاریان پێدەکرێت یان دابین دەکرین بۆ ئەو ئەپلیکەیشنانەی یان بەرنامە بەکاربەرانەی کاریان پێ دەکرێت بۆ مۆبایل و ئەو بەرنامانەی پشت بەست بە تەکنەلۆجیا و پەرەی پێدراوە کە ئەوانیش زیرەکی دەستکرد بەکاردێنن بۆباشترکردنی پرۆسەی فێربوونی زمان لەرێگای پالپشتی بەگوێرەی پێداویستی قوتابیەکە وە هەروەها لەکات و شوێنی گونجاو. هەرچەندە ئامرازەکانی وەک چات جی پی تی و ئیلسا سپیک و ناچرال ریدەرو دۆلینگۆ خراونەتە ناو یان خزاونەتە ناو سیستەمی پەروەردەی جیهانی بەڵام بەکارهێنانەکانیان تائێستا لەپرۆسەی فێربوونی زمانی بێگانە بەتەواوی نەدۆزراونەتەوە یان بەتەواوی بەدواداچونی تێرو تەسەلیان بۆنەکراوە، کەلە هەرێمی کوردستان شێوازەکانی وانەوتنەوە تەقلیدین یان کۆنن کەمامۆستا سەنتەر و بالادەست و زاڵن بەسەر پرۆسەی خوێندن و فێربوون، وەهەروەها ئەمە وادەکات کە قسەکردن و بەشداری و متمانەی قوتابی سنوردارببکرێت لەپرۆسەی فێربونی زمانی بێگانە. ئەم تویژینەوەیە کەتوێژینەوەییکی وەسفیە لێکۆلینەوە لەڕۆڵی ئەپلیکەیشنەکانی زیرەکی دەستکرد دەکات کەبۆباشترکردن و پەرەپێدانی کاراماییەکانی قسەکردن بەزمانی ئینگلیزی لەنێو قوتابیانی زانکۆ باشتربکات ،هەروەها ئەم تویژینەوەیە میتۆدی چەندێتی پەیرەو دەکات لەڕێگای بەکارهێنانی راپرسییکی پێنج خاڵی بەپێی پێوەری لیکێرت کە بۆ 200 خوێندکاری قۆناغی چوارەمی زمانی ئینگلیزی لەسێ کۆلێژی زانکۆی سەلاحەدین –هەولێر لەماوەی ماڵی خوێندنی –2025 2024 ئەنجامدراوە. متمانەپێکراوی ئەم ئامرازەی بەکارهێناوە لەتویژینەوەکەدا بە ئەلفای کرۆنباخکە 0.83 بوو پشتراستکرایەوە و داتاکان بە بەکارهێنانی بەرنامەی شیرکردنەوەی ئامار(وەشانی SPSS-30) شیکرانەوە. ئەنجامەکان ئاشکرای دەکەن کە ئامرازەکانی ژیری دەستکرد بە شێوەییکی بەرچاو یارمەتی فێرخوازان دەدەن لەباشترکردنی گوێبەکردن، ڕواندنەوەی قەلەقی وە زیاتکردنی متمانە بەخۆبوون لەڕێگای فیدباک و گفتوگۆی هاوشێوەکراوی راستەقینە. خوایندکاران ئەم ئامرازانەیان بەکاریگەر زانی لەزاڵبوون بەسەر دڵەڕاوکێ و بەرزکردنەوەی پاڵنەردا، بەتایبەت لەوچوارچێوانەی کە کارلێک و بەریەک کەوتنی سروشتی سنوردارن. سەرەڕای ئەوەش، بەشداربوان ئاماژەیان بەئاستەنگەکان کرد، لەوانە سنوردارکردنی دەستراگەیشتن بەدیجیتاڵی ، نەبوونی یەکخستنی مەنهەج ، وەراهێنانی ناتەواوی خوێندکاران. سەرەڕای ئەوەش، بەکارهێنانی ئەکنەلۆژیا دەرکەوت کەپالنەر و بەشداریکردنی خوێندکاران لەکاتی وانەکاندا زیاددەکات، ئەمەش بەشداڕە لە ژینگەییکی کارلێککەرانەتر و تەرکیزکراوتر لەپۆلدا. تویژینەوەکە بەئەنجامە دەگا کەیەکخستنی ژیری دەستکرد دەتوانێت پردێک بێت لەنێوان تێگەیشتنی تیۆری و توانای قسەکردنی پراکتیکیدا دروستبکات، ئەزمونێکی فێرکاری داینامیکتر و وە خوێندکار بکاتە سەنتەر لە پۆلدا.

وشەسەرەکییەکان: ژیری دەستکرد، خوێندکارانی زمانی ئینگلیزی وەک زمانێکی بیانی، تەکنەلۆژیای فێربوونی زمان، کاراماییەکانی قسەکردن، وە متمانە بەخۆبوون.

تعزيز مهارات التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية من خلال أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي المعززة: دراسة وصفية

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الملخص

تشير الأدوات المدعومة بالذكاء الاصطناعي إلى التطبيقات المُحسّنة تكنولوجيًا والتي تستخدم الذكاء الاصطناعي لتحسين تعلم اللغة من خلال دعم آني ومُخصص. على الرغم من تزايد دمج أدوات مثل ChatGPT وElsa Speak وDuolingo وNatural Reader في أنظمة التعليم العالمية، إلا أن استخدامها لا يزال غير مُستكشف جيدًا في سياقات تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في إقليم كردستان، حيث لا تزال المناهج التقليدية المُركزة على المُعلم تهيمن، وغالبًا ما تُحدّ من فرص الطلاب في التحدث وتفاعلهم وثقتهم بأنفسهم. تبحث هذه الدراسة الوصفية في دور تطبيقات الذكاء الاصطناعي في تعزيز مهارات التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب الجامعات الأكراد الذين يدرسون اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتعتمد الدراسة على نهج كمي من خلال استبيان ليكرت مغلق ذي خمس نقاط، أُجري على 200 طالب لغة إنجليزية في السنة الرابعة من ثلاث كليات بجامعة صلاح الدين – أربيل خلال العام الدراسي 2024–2025. وقد تم تأكيد موثوقية الأداة باستخدام ألفا كرونباخ 0.83، وتم تحليل البيانات باستخدام برنامج SPSS (الإصدار 30). تكشف النتائج أن أدوات الذكاء الاصطناعي تُساعد المتعلمين بشكل كبير على تحسين النطق والطلاقة والثقة بالنفس

من خلال التغذية الراجعة الفورية والمحادثات المُحاكاة. وقد وجد الطلاب أن هذه الأدوات فعّالة في التغلب على القلق وتعزيز الدافعية، لا سيما في السياقات التي تتسم بتفاعل طبيعي محدود. ومع ذلك، أشار المشاركون إلى وجود تحديات، منها محدودية الوصول الرقمي، وضعف تكامل المناهج الدراسية، وضعف تدريب الطلاب. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، وُجد أن استخدام التكنولوجيا يزيد من تحفيز الطلاب ومشاركتهم أثناء الدروس، مما يُسهم في بيئة صفية أكثر تفاعلية وتركيزًا. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن دمج الذكاء الاصطناعي يُمكن أن يُسدّ الفجوة بين الفهم النظري والقدرة على التحدث العملي، مما يخلق تجربة تعليمية أكثر ديناميكية وتركيزًا على الطالب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الذكاء الاصطناعي (AI)، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، مهارات التحدث، تكنولوجيا تعلم اللغة، الثقة.