

EXPLORING STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF USING CHATGPT AS A LEARNING MEDIUM TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS

Exploring Students' Experience of Using ChatGPT as a Learning Medium to Improve Speaking Skills: A Qualitative Study of University Students

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Abstract

This study explored how ChatGPT supports the development of students' speaking skills in English learning. Speaking is often considered one of the most challenging skills for English learners due to limited opportunities for practice and low confidence in expressing ideas orally. In response to this issue, the use of digital learning tools is considered important to provide additional support for students outside the classroom environment. This research involved five of university students and employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through semi structured interviews to explore students' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in using ChatGPT for speaking practice. The collected data were then analyzed using case data design to identify recurring patterns related to speaking development and learning experiences. The findings is expected to that ChatGPT assists students in improving their speaking skills by providing accessible and flexible practice opportunities, increasing confidence, and encouraging independent learning. In addition, students is expected to reduced anxiety, hesitation, and embarrassment when practicing English speaking through the application, which made them more willing to communicate in English. In conclusion, this study indicates that ChatGPT has a positive contribution to students' speaking skill development by serving as an effective supplementary learning medium in English language learning.

Keywords: ChatGPT, English Learning, Speaking Skill, Digital Technologies.

Introduction

Nowadays, the development of technology has brought significant changes to various aspects of human life, including the field of education. The rapid development of technology has significantly transformed various aspects of human life, including education, particularly through the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies (Tlili et al., 2023). One of the most

influential technological developments is the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The presence of AI provides various conveniences for people in carrying out daily activities because this technology is capable of providing information quickly, practically, and easily accessible. Through a single application, users can obtain various kinds of information and assistance according to their needs. This condition shows that technology has

become an important part of supporting learning processes and human activities in the digital era.

One of the AI-based technologies that is currently widely used is ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI. ChatGPT is capable of generating quick, detailed, and human-like responses. Users only need to provide certain instructions or questions, and ChatGPT will deliver relevant information according to their needs. However, ChatGPT still requires human control and instructions, meaning that this technology cannot function independently without commands from users.

The use of ChatGPT has become increasingly popular among students and the general public, especially in the context of English language learning. In English learning, speaking skill is considered one of the most challenging abilities to master. Students are not only expected to speak fluently, but they are also required to communicate with good pronunciation and confidence. However, many students still face difficulties in developing their speaking skills because they often feel shy, afraid of making mistakes, lack self-confidence, and have limited vocabulary.

In addition, speaking instruction in traditional classrooms often has limitations in terms of time and practice opportunities. The large number of students and the limited time allocated for English lessons each week, particularly for speaking activities, prevent all students from obtaining sufficient opportunities to practice speaking during classroom learning. As a result, students experience difficulties in improving their speaking skills optimally. In fact, speaking skills require consistent and continuous practice in order for students' abilities to develop effectively. In this situation, ChatGPT emerges as a flexible and easily accessible learning medium that can support students' learning process anytime and anywhere through a familiar application on smartphones or computers. ChatGPT

offers a flexible and accessible medium that may support learners beyond the limitations of classroom time and teacher availability (Kasneci et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). By utilizing smartphones and internet connections, students can use ChatGPT anytime and anywhere to independently practice speaking.

Besides providing information, ChatGPT can also be used as a conversational simulation medium, allowing students to practice speaking as if they were communicating directly with a real conversation partner. Through this use, students have the opportunity to learn in a more comfortable and low-pressure environment. This can help reduce speaking anxiety while simultaneously increasing students' engagement in the learning process. In line with (Pratiwi et al., 2024), the use of AI-based technology provides learners with opportunities to practice speaking more independently and flexibly, thereby supporting the improvement of their speaking skills.

Previous studies have highlighted the potential of AI-powered tools in enhancing language learning. ChatGPT, for instance, has been found to support students by providing immediate responses, vocabulary suggestions, and conversational practice opportunities (Kasneci et al., 2023). In addition, research on AI and chatbot-based learning shows that such technologies can improve students' engagement and language performance when used appropriately (Wang et al., 2024). However, despite these advantages, most previous research has mainly focused on the advantages of ChatGPT from a quantitative perspective. There is still limited studies focusing specifically on students' lived experiences in using ChatGPT for oral communication ability, particularly from a qualitative perspective that captures perceptions, challenges, and learning strategies. While previous studies have explored the effectiveness and educational potential of ChatGPT in language learning (Kasneci et

al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024), limited qualitative research have specifically investigated students' lived experiences in using ChatGPT for speaking practice within higher education contexts. Existing research tends to focus more on performance outcomes and technological advantages rather than students' perceptions, interaction experiences, emotional responses, and challenges during ChatGPT-assisted speaking activities. In addition, there is still limited qualitative research examining how students interpret and experience ChatGPT speaking practice in authentic learning situations.

In this study, ChatGPT is positioned as a learning medium that facilitates students' speaking practice beyond traditional classroom limitations. However, the effectiveness of ChatGPT in supporting speaking development cannot be separated from students' personal experiences and perceptions while using the technology. Students' experiences and perceptions toward ChatGPT may influence how speaking skills develop during the learning process. This study connects the use of ChatGPT, students' lived experiences, and speaking skill development as interconnected aspects within AI-assisted language learning contexts.

Therefore, the investigating students' experiences in using ChatGPT is important because the effectiveness of educational technology depends not only on its features, but also on how learners perceive, experience, and utilize the technology in authentic learning situations. Some students may perceive ChatGPT as helpful for practicing conversations and increasing self-confidence. However, others may encounter several limitations, such as the lack of emotional interaction, the potential dependence on AI, or difficulties in verifying the accuracy of the information provided. This is consistent with the findings of (Altun, 2025), which suggest that while some students may find

ChatGPT helpful in practicing conversations and building confidence, others may face limitations such as accuracy concerns, lack of emotional interaction, or dependency on AI assistance.

The researcher found that investigating students' experiences with ChatGPT is important because speaking development is not solely influenced by technological accessibility, but also by learners' psychological readiness, perceptions, and interaction experiences during the learning process. Understanding these experiences may provide deeper insights into understanding these experiences may provide deeper insights into how ChatGPT-assisted learning environments support or hinder students' speaking development in higher education contexts.

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How do university students perceive the use of ChatGPT in practicing English speaking skills?
2. What speaking learning experiences do students gain from using ChatGPT?
3. What opportunities and challenges do students encounter when using ChatGPT for speaking practice?

The purpose of this research is to investigate and describe students' lived experiences in using ChatGPT for improving their speaking ability. By focusing on qualitative insights, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how AI technology supports or limits language learning processes. In addition, this research aims to contribute to the development of technology-enhanced language learning strategies, particularly in speaking instruction. The significance of this study lies in both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it is expected to enrich the literature on AI in language learning, especially in the

context of speaking skill development and learner experience. Practically, the findings may provide valuable insights for English teachers, curriculum designers, and students regarding the effective integration of ChatGPT into speaking practice activities. Furthermore, it may encourage learners to use AI tools more critically and strategically in their language learning process.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore students' experiences in using ChatGPT as a learning medium for improving English speaking skills. The researcher chose this approach because the study focused on understanding how students perceived and experienced the use of ChatGPT during speaking practice, including the benefits, challenges, and learning experiences that influenced their speaking development. Through this approach, the researcher was able to gain deeper insights into how students interacted with AI-assisted learning tools in real learning situations. The study involved five university students who had experience using ChatGPT for English speaking practice. According to John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell (2023), qualitative research is appropriate for studies that aim to explore participants' experiences and interpret how they understand a particular phenomenon in real-life situations. In this study, the researcher focused on how students interacted with ChatGPT, how often they used it in speaking activities, and how the application influenced their confidence and speaking development.

For this study, the participants were five university students who had experience using ChatGPT for English speaking practice. The participants were selected using purposive sampling because the researcher intentionally chose students who met the criteria relevant to the objectives of the study. The selected participants actively used ChatGPT to

practice speaking, improve pronunciation, increase vocabulary, or build speaking confidence. Purposive sampling was considered appropriate because the researcher needed participants who had direct experience with the phenomenon being investigated. In qualitative research, purposive sampling is commonly used to obtain detailed and relevant information from participants who are closely related to the research topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). All participants were also willing to share their experiences openly during the interview process. The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative case study approach. First, all interview recordings around 10-15 minutes were transcribed into written form to ensure the accuracy of the data. After that, the researcher read the interview transcripts several times to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences and responses. The researcher then identified important statements and relevant information related to the use of ChatGPT, students' learning experiences, and speaking skill development. The data were interpreted descriptively by connecting participants' responses with the focus of the study and the research questions. During the analysis process, the researcher compared the participants' answers to identify similarities and differences in their experiences while using ChatGPT for speaking practice. Finally, the findings were organized and explained systematically to provide a clear understanding of students' experiences in using ChatGPTs as a learning medium for improving English speaking skills. Semi-structured interviews are often used in qualitative studies because they provide flexibility and create opportunities for participants to express their thoughts more openly (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021).

The research procedure consisted of several stages. First, the researcher identified the research problem and selected participants based on the research criteria. Second, the researcher prepared

the interview guide and arranged interview schedules with the participants. Third, the interviews were conducted and recorded during the data collection process. After conducting the interviews, the researcher transcribed the recorded data into written form. The researcher then analyzed the data through coding and theme development to identify important patterns related to the study. Finally, the findings were interpreted and presented based on students' experiences in using ChatGPT for English speaking practice.

Tabel 1. Semi-structured Interview Questions

No	Interview Questions	Research Focus
1	How do you experience the use of ChatGPT as a learning medium for practicing English speaking in your daily learning activities?	ChatGPT as learning medium + students' experiences
2	In what ways does ChatGPT influence your speaking skill development, particularly in terms of fluency, vocabulary use, and speaking confidence?	Speaking skill development
3	How do you perceive the benefits and challenges of using ChatGPT in supporting your English speaking practice? Please explain in detail based on your personal experience.	Benefits + challenges + critical reflection

The interview questions in this study were developed based on the principles of semi-structured interviews, which emphasize the use of open-ended and flexible questions to explore participants' lived experiences in depth (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The questions were designed in alignment with the research objectives to ensure that the data collected could

directly address the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). In addition, the use of open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express their experiences, perceptions, and challenges in using ChatGPT for speaking practice (Fadli, 2021).

Finding and Discussion

The findings of this study were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with five university students who had experience using ChatGPT as a learning medium for English speaking practice. The interviews focused on students' experiences, their perceptions of ChatGPT as a learning medium, and the influence of ChatGPT on their speaking development. After the interview data were transcribed and interpreted descriptively using a qualitative case study approach, several important findings were identified regarding the benefits, experiences, and challenges encountered by students while using ChatGPT for speaking practice. The findings are presented based on the research questions of the study.

Students' Experiences in Using ChatGPT for Speaking Practice

The findings revealed that most participants had positive experiences while using ChatGPT for speaking practice. Students explained that ChatGPT provided a flexible learning environment where they could practice English more freely without being limited by classroom schedules or social pressure. Most participants stated that they used ChatGPT to simulate conversations, ask questions in English, practice pronunciation, and improve sentence construction. Several participants also mentioned that they practiced English more frequently after using ChatGPT because the application was easy to access anytime through smartphones.

Most participants admitted that they initially felt nervous and lacked

confidence when speaking English in front of other people. However, regular interaction with ChatGPT gradually helped them become more comfortable expressing ideas in English. One participant explained that practicing with ChatGPT felt less stressful because the application did not directly judge their mistakes. Another participant mentioned that ChatGPT allowed repeated speaking practice without embarrassment, which encouraged them to participate more actively in English conversations.

These findings support Altun (2025), who explains that ChatGPT can create flexible speaking opportunities that allow learners to practice communication more independently and confidently. Similarly, Pratiwi et al. (2024) state that ChatGPT voice conversation features may support speaking practice by creating a more relaxed and less stressful learning atmosphere for language learners.

In addition, students reported that ChatGPT encouraged them to become more independent learners. Instead of depending entirely on classroom instruction, students were able to explore various speaking topics independently and practice expressing opinions using English. This finding indicates that AI-assisted learning tools may support learner autonomy by providing opportunities for self-directed speaking practice.

ChatGPT as a Learning Medium for Speaking Development

The findings showed that participants perceived ChatGPT as a flexible and accessible learning medium that supported their speaking practice beyond classroom learning. Most students explained that they could practice English anytime and anywhere according to their personal learning schedules. This flexibility encouraged students to practice more consistently outside formal learning activities.

Another important finding was that ChatGPT helped students improve vocabulary knowledge, fluency, pronunciation awareness, and sentence organization. Several participants explained that ChatGPT introduced them to new vocabulary items, sentence structures, and conversational expressions that could be applied in daily communication. When students had difficulty expressing ideas, ChatGPT provided examples that helped them continue conversations more smoothly.

Participants also explained that ChatGPT created a more comfortable learning atmosphere because they could practice speaking without fear of negative judgment from teachers or classmates. This condition reduced speaking anxiety and increased students' confidence during speaking activities. According to Altun (2025), AI-based conversational tools may reduce learners' anxiety because they provide supportive speaking environments without direct social pressure.

Furthermore, some participants stated that ChatGPT made speaking practice more interactive and interesting compared to conventional speaking activities that are often limited by classroom time. Students could discuss hobbies, academic topics, daily activities, and future plans using English conversations with ChatGPT. This finding is consistent with Pratiwi et al. (2024), who explain that AI-assisted speaking practice may encourage continuous interaction and improve students' motivation to communicate in English.

Challenges Faced by Students While Using ChatGPT

Although participants generally reported positive experiences, the findings also revealed several challenges in using ChatGPT for speaking practice. One challenge frequently mentioned by students was the occasional inaccuracy of AI-generated responses. Some participants

explained that ChatGPT sometimes provided responses that sounded unnatural or did not fully match the context of the conversation. Therefore, students felt the need to confirm certain information through teachers or other learning resources.

Another challenge identified in this study was the limited emotional interaction provided by AI communication. Several participants stated that practicing with ChatGPT felt different from communicating with real people because the interaction lacked emotional expression, spontaneous reactions, and natural social communication. Participants believed that real-life communication skills still required interaction with teachers and peers.

The findings also showed that some students became overly dependent on ChatGPT during speaking practice. A few participants admitted that they sometimes relied too much on AI-generated responses when organizing ideas or building conversations. This condition may reduce opportunities for spontaneous communication if students depend excessively on AI assistance. Pratiwi et al. (2024) also discuss concerns regarding excessive dependence on AI technology during speaking activities.

Technical limitations were also identified as challenges during the learning process. Several students explained that stable internet access was necessary to use ChatGPT effectively. Poor internet connection occasionally interrupted speaking practice and reduced learning efficiency. In addition, participants stated that teacher guidance was still important to help students use ChatGPT appropriately and critically as an educational tool.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that ChatGPT has meaningful potential as a supplementary learning medium for improving English speaking skills. The study revealed that the use of ChatGPT

was closely connected to students' speaking development, learning experiences, and perceptions toward AI-assisted learning environments. Through regular interaction with ChatGPT, students experienced increased confidence, reduced anxiety, and greater motivation to practice speaking more consistently.

This study also demonstrates that students' personal experiences and perceptions played an important role in influencing how speaking development occurred during the learning process. Most participants felt more comfortable practicing with ChatGPT because they did not experience direct social pressure while speaking English. As a result, students became more willing to express ideas, repeat conversations, and practice English independently. These findings support recent discussions regarding the importance of emotional comfort and learner confidence in speaking development.

In addition, the findings suggest that ChatGPT supported learner autonomy by allowing students to control their learning pace and choose speaking topics based on their interests and needs. Students were able to practice English beyond classroom limitations and engage in more flexible speaking activities. This finding supports Altun (2025), who explains that AI-assisted language learning may encourage independent learning and personalized speaking experiences.

However, despite the positive contributions, this study also indicates that ChatGPT cannot fully replace authentic human interaction in speaking learning contexts. Speaking ability involves not only vocabulary and grammar mastery, but also emotional communication, spontaneous responses, and social interaction skills. Although ChatGPT provides useful support for speaking practice, students still need direct communication experiences with teachers and peers to develop more natural speaking competence.

Overall, the findings of this study contribute to the growing discussion regarding the integration of AI technology in English language learning. The study suggests that ChatGPT can function effectively as a flexible speaking practice medium that supports confidence, learner autonomy, and speaking development among university students. Nevertheless, students should use AI technology critically and balance AI-assisted learning with authentic human interaction to achieve more effective speaking development.

Conclusions

This study explored university students' experiences in using ChatGPT as a learning medium for improving English speaking skills. Based on the findings obtained from semi-structured interviews with five university students, the study revealed that ChatGPT provided positive contributions to students' speaking development, particularly in increasing confidence, encouraging independent learning, and providing flexible opportunities for speaking practice.

The findings showed that students perceived ChatGPT as a practical and accessible learning medium that allowed them to practice English more freely without fear of making mistakes or feeling embarrassed. Most participants explained that regular interaction with ChatGPT helped them improve vocabulary knowledge, sentence organization, fluency, and confidence during speaking activities. In addition, students appreciated the flexibility of the application because they could practice English anytime and anywhere according to their personal learning needs.

The study also found that students' experiences and perceptions influenced how effectively ChatGPT supported their speaking development. While most participants reported positive experiences, several students still experienced difficulties in adapting to AI-assisted

speaking practice and improving communication skills consistently. This finding indicates that the effectiveness of ChatGPT may depend on students' motivation, learning habits, confidence, and willingness to practice English continuously.

However, several challenges were also identified during the use of ChatGPT, including occasional inaccuracies in AI-generated responses, limited emotional interaction, and the risk of excessive dependence on AI assistance.

Therefore, although ChatGPT can function as an effective supplementary learning medium, it should not completely replace direct communication with teachers and peers in speaking activities.

Overall, this study concludes that ChatGPT has meaningful potential in supporting university students' English speaking development. The application can help learners practice speaking more confidently, independently, and flexibly while reducing anxiety during speaking activities. Nevertheless, authentic communication experiences and teacher guidance remain important to help students develop more natural and effective communication skills in real-life situations.

Table 2. Summary of Students' Experiences, Learning Outcomes, and Challenges in Using ChatGPT for Speaking Skill Development

Main Findings	Description (Summary of Participants' Responses)
Positive Learning Experience	Students felt more comfortable and less anxious when practicing speaking with ChatGPT because they could speak without fear of being judged or embarrassed

Speaking Skill Development	Students reported improvement in confidence, vocabulary use, fluency, and sentence construction after regularly using ChatGPT for speaking practice.
Learning Flexibility & Autonomy	Students could practice speaking anytime and anywhere, which encouraged independent learning beyond classroom limitations.
Challenges in AI Responses	Students experienced occasional inaccurate, unnatural, or less contextual responses from ChatGPT during conversations.
Limited Emotional Interaction	Students stated that ChatGPT lacked emotional expression and real human interaction, making it different from real communication.

Dependency Issue	Some students became dependent on ChatGPT for generating responses or ideas before speaking independently.
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The findings were organized and presented in a table format to summarize emerging themes from the interview data (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Braun & Clarke, 2021). This approach helps to clearly present participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in a structured manner. Table 2 summarizes the main findings derived from the semi-structured interviews with five university students regarding their experiences in using ChatGPT for English speaking practice. The table presents three interconnected aspects of the study: students' learning experiences, perceived speaking development, and the challenges encountered during the learning process.

Overall, the findings show that ChatGPT was perceived as a supportive learning medium that helped students feel more comfortable and less anxious when practicing speaking English. The flexibility of the application allowed students to practice speaking beyond classroom limitations, which encouraged more frequent and independent learning. As a result, students reported improvements in confidence, vocabulary use, fluency, and sentence construction.

However, the table also highlights several challenges experienced by the participants. Although ChatGPT provided useful speaking practice opportunities, students noted that the responses generated were sometimes inaccurate or unnatural in specific contexts. In addition, the lack of emotional interaction made the communication feel less realistic compared to speaking with real people. Some

students also indicated a tendency to rely on ChatGPT when constructing responses, which may reduce spontaneous speaking practice if not properly controlled.

These findings indicate that while ChatGPT has strong potential as a supplementary tool for developing English speaking skills, it should be used alongside real human interaction and guided learning to achieve more balanced speaking development. The table therefore reflects both the benefits and limitations of AI-assisted speaking practice as experienced by the participants in this study

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