

In-Depth Interviews: Students' Perspectives on The Application of AI in Studying English-Speaking

Amon Bernabas Tenis

Faculty of Cultural Science, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia

Amonbernabastenis1996@mail.ugm.ac.id

Abstrak

Studi ini menganalisis pendapat peserta didik tentang penerapan *artificial intelegent* (AI) dalam mengembangkan keterampilan berbicara bahasa Inggris. AI sebagai bagian dari perkembangan jaman, seperti chatbot dan perangkat lunak pengenalan ucapan, telah mendapatkan daya tarik dalam pendidikan bahasa, tetapi pengalaman dan pandangan siswa masih kurang dieksplorasi. Dengan menggunakan wawancara kualitatif yang mendalam, studi ini mengumpulkan data dari siswa untuk menilai efektivitas AI, tantangannya, dan pengalaman mereka secara keseluruhan menggunakan AI untuk latihan berbicara. Temuan tersebut mengungkapkan bahwa siswa menganggap AI sebagai alat yang berharga untuk meningkatkan pengucapan, kefasihan, dan kepercayaan diri. Banyak peserta mencatat bahwa AI memberikan umpan balik langsung, memungkinkan koreksi waktu nyata, yang mendorong latihan yang lebih sering dan mendorong pembelajaran mandiri. Fleksibilitas yang ditawarkan oleh AI, yang memungkinkan siswa untuk berlatih berbicara kapan saja dan di mana saja, merupakan manfaat signifikan lainnya. Namun, siswa juga menyoroti beberapa tantangan, termasuk kesulitan AI dalam mengenali aksen yang berbeda dan memahami nuansa emosional dan kontekstual dari percakapan manusia. Beberapa siswa menyatakan kekhawatiran tentang sifat umpan balik AI yang impersonal dan mekanis, yang tidak memiliki kedalaman dan personalisasi yang ditawarkan oleh instruktur manusia. Selain itu, beberapa peserta menyebutkan bahwa mereka takut menjadi terlalu bergantung pada AI dan kehilangan umpan balik yang lebih bernuansa dan didorong oleh manusia. Terlepas dari keterbatasan ini, siswa setuju bahwa AI dapat melengkapi metode pengajaran tradisional dengan memberikan latihan berbicara tambahan, terutama ketika akses langsung ke guru tidak tersedia. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa meskipun AI dapat meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara, AI paling efektif jika dikombinasikan dengan instruksi manusia untuk mengatasi keterbatasannya dalam memahami seluk-beluk komunikasi manusia.

Kata kunci: Kecerdasan Buatan (AI); Berbicara bahasa Inggris; Perspektif siswa

Abstract

This study explores students' perspectives on applying artificial intelligence (AI) in developing English speaking skills. AI tools like chatbots and speech recognition software have gained traction in language education, but students' experiences and views remain underexplored. Using in-depth qualitative interviews, this study collected data from students to assess the effectiveness of AI, its challenges, and their overall experience using AI for speaking practice. The findings revealed that students perceived AI as a valuable tool for improving pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. Many participants noted that AI provided immediate feedback, allowing for real-time correction, which encouraged more frequent practice and encouraged self-directed learning. The flexibility offered by AI, allowing students to practice speaking anytime and anywhere, was another significant benefit. However, students also highlighted several challenges, including AI's difficulty in recognizing different accents and understanding the emotional and contextual nuances of human conversation. Some students expressed concerns about the impersonal and mechanical nature of AI feedback, which lacked the depth and personalization offered by a human instructor. Additionally, some participants mentioned that they feared becoming too reliant on AI and missing out on more nuanced, human-driven feedback. Despite these limitations, students agreed that AI could complement traditional teaching methods by providing additional speaking practice, especially when direct access to a

teacher is not available. Overall, the study concluded that while AI can improve speaking skills, it is most effective when combined with human instruction to overcome its limitations in understanding the intricacies of human communication.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence (AI); English speaking; Student perspectives*

Introduction

Understanding students' perspectives on AI in education is crucial, as their experiences and attitudes significantly impact their engagement and learning outcomes. According to Wang (2022), students often have mixed feelings about the integration of AI in language learning. While some appreciated the personalized feedback and support, others expressed concerns about the authenticity of AI interactions compared to real-world conversations. This implies that educators should consider students' voices to create effective learning environments that harness the potential of AI while addressing their concerns. The application of AI tools in speaking instruction has shown promising results in improving language acquisition. Lee et al. (2020) highlighted that AI-driven language learning platforms can provide real-time feedback and facilitate practice in a non-pressurized environment, thereby increasing students' confidence. This suggests that the use of AI in speaking instruction can improve fluency and accuracy, making it a valuable resource for language learners. However, understanding how students perceive these tools is essential to maximizing their benefits. Furthermore, understanding students' perspectives is crucial as it allows educators to tailor teaching methods to meet students' needs. When students feel heard and are concerned about being addressed, they are more likely to engage and benefit from the learning process. By applying these insights, educators can create more effective, student-centered learning environments, maximizing the potential of AI tools and other educational methods.

In-depth interviews are a qualitative research method used to gather detailed information from participants through open, face-to-face conversations. These interviews aim to explore the experiences, thoughts, and emotions of respondents in depth, allowing researchers to gain nuanced insights into the subject matter. These interviews provide a deep understanding of complex phenomena that may not be easily captured through structured surveys or questionnaires. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), in-depth interviews are effective because they create a supportive environment where participants feel comfortable sharing personal stories and detailed reflections. This method encourages participants to express their thoughts freely, which helps researchers uncover deeper patterns in their responses. Seidman (2006) also highlights the value of in-depth interviews in understanding the context behind participants' perspectives. He notes that these interviews allow researchers to dig deeper than just surface answers, explore the meaning of participants' experiences, and provide insights that are important for interpreting the broader context of the study.

Several previous studies have also focused on this research, such as; Lee et al. (2020) investigated the effectiveness of an AI-based language learning tool, revealing that the application significantly improved students' speaking proficiency and engagement. The findings showed that students who interacted with an AI chatbot showed increased confidence in their speaking abilities. Similarly, Huang et al. (2021) examined the impact of AI on language acquisition, stressing that the personalized feedback provided by an AI system promotes a more tailored learning experience. Their study showed that students appreciated the immediate feedback, which helped in refining their speaking skills. Further exploration by Wang (2022) focused on students' attitudes towards AI in language learning. The study found that while students acknowledged the potential of AI technology, they often expressed concerns about the authenticity of AI interactions compared to real-world conversations, which may hinder their acceptance of the tool. Despite recent advances, there is still a critical gap in understanding how students perceive and experience the application of AI in their speaking lessons. While the above-mentioned studies provide insights into the effectiveness and acceptance of AI technology, they primarily focus on general attitudes or quantitative measures of success, neglecting more in-depth qualitative evaluations of students' perspectives. This study aims to complement this by conducting in-depth interviews with students to gain insights into their experiences, perceptions, and challenges related to the use of AI in speaking instruction.

Methodology

To address the research questions, this study employed qualitative interviews as the primary research method. In-depth interviews allowed for a comprehensive exploration of students' perspectives, facilitating rich discussions about their experiences with AI in speaking instruction (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This method will enable the researcher to gather nuanced insights and explore participants' feelings and thoughts in a supportive environment, allowing for follow-up questions to deepen their understanding of their responses. Given the subjective nature of students' perspectives, qualitative interviews will be conducted with a diverse group of students from various educational backgrounds and proficiency levels. The data collected will be analyzed thematically to identify key patterns and themes related to students' experiences with AI in teaching speaking (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Thematic analysis is one of the methods used to analyze data to identify patterns or discover themes from the data collected by researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method is highly effective when a study intends to thoroughly examine qualitative data to uncover the relationships between patterns within a phenomenon and explain the extent to which the phenomenon occurs from the researcher's perspective (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Holway & Todres (2003) state that thematic analysis serves as the foundation for analysis in qualitative research.

Discussion

The researcher gathered data and analyzed it to state the theme of each answer given by the participants. The participants in this research were English students, which is written with their initials: EL, WL, AP, AL, and YB. Here is the data gathered from the participants mentioned.

Table 1. Data collected from the participants

Question	Answer and participant	Theme
Can you describe your experience using AI tools (e.g. chatbots, speech recognition software) in your speaking lesson?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. "I've been using chatbots and speech recognition software in my lessons for a while now. It feels like having a personal tutor available 24/7. Sometimes I practice pronunciation by talking to the AI, and it helps me figure out where I'm going wrong." (EL)2. "My experience has been pretty positive. The chatbots make it easy to simulate conversations, and I can practice speaking on various topics without feeling judged." (WL)3. "At first, I wasn't sure how AI tools would help, but after using them, I realized that they offer quick feedback, especially with pronunciation and fluency. I've started to rely on them a lot more." (AP)4. Using AI tools for speaking lessons is a game-changer for me. I can practice at any time, and it gives me the flexibility to try new phrases without the fear of making mistakes in front of others." (AL)5. "The AI tools I've used are great for practicing both speaking and listening. I can	Experience with AI tools

	<p>speak into the app, and it will respond instantly, which feels like having a mini conversation partner." (YB)</p>	
<p>How effective do you find AI tools in improving your speaking skills? Can you provide specific examples?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "They've helped me improve my pronunciation. For example, when I mispronounce words, the speech recognition software corrects me, and after a few tries, I start getting it right." (EL) 2. "AI tools are effective for me, especially for building confidence. Once, I practiced a business presentation with a chatbot and felt much more prepared when I had to do it in real life." (WL) 3. "I've found that my fluency has improved because AI tools let me repeat conversations multiple times. I practiced small talk for a networking event, and the AI tool helped me fine-tune my responses." (AP) 4. "They are very effective in helping me expand my vocabulary. I often ask the chatbot to explain new words or phrases in context, which has boosted my confidence in using them in real conversations." (AL) 5. "I think they're great for practicing at your own pace. I remember practicing pronunciation of difficult sounds with the AI until I finally got it right. It's a big help when you don't have immediate access to a teacher." (YL) 	<p>Perceived effectiveness</p>
<p>Do you feel more engaged and motivated to practice speaking when using AI tools compared to traditional methods?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Yes, I do feel more engaged. I think it's because I can practice at any time and place, and it feels more like a game than a formal lesson, which makes it fun." (EL) 2. "I feel more motivated using AI tools. It's less stressful than practicing with a real person, so I'm more willing to try out new words or phrases without fear of making mistakes." (WL) 3. "Definitely! I think because AI tools are available all the time, I can practice whenever I want, which keeps me motivated. Plus, the instant feedback makes me want to improve constantly." (AP) 4. "Sometimes, yes. AI tools make me more eager to practice because they offer real-time responses, and I feel like I'm making progress even when I don't have access to a teacher." (AL) 5. "Yes, I like that I can set my own pace with AI tools. I don't feel pressured to keep up with a class, so I stay motivated to practice even when I'm tired." (YB) 	<p>Engagement and Motivation</p>

How do you perceive the feedback provided by AI tools? Is it helpful for your learning?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "The feedback is generally helpful, especially when it comes to pronunciation. It shows me exactly where I'm going wrong and helps me correct my mistakes right away." (EL) 2. "It's really helpful! I like that AI tools can give instant corrections and suggestions for improvement. It's much faster than waiting for feedback from a teacher." (WL) 3. "I find the feedback useful, but sometimes it feels a bit mechanical. However, it still helps a lot with things like grammar and pronunciation." (AP) 4. "For the most part, the feedback is helpful, especially for immediate corrections. I just wish it could give more detailed explanations sometimes." (AL) 5. "I appreciate the feedback, but there are moments where it feels a little too rigid. That said, it's still beneficial for improving my speaking, especially when it highlights specific pronunciation issues." (YB) 	Feedback quality
What concerns or challenges do you encounter when using AI for speaking practice?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "One of my concerns is that the AI might not always understand my accent, so sometimes it gives incorrect feedback." (EL) 2. "The biggest challenge for me is that the AI doesn't always understand context or emotion, which can be limiting in more complex conversations." (WL) 3. "Sometimes I feel that AI cannot give in-depth explanations, especially for subtle language nuances, which can be a bit frustrating." (AP) 4. "I worry about becoming too dependent on AI. Since it doesn't always pick up on my specific mistakes, I might miss out on personalized feedback that a teacher could provide." (AP) 5. "One challenge is that the conversation feels very robotic at times, and I miss the natural flow of speaking with a human." (YB) 	Concerns and challenges

Based on the data above, Students express a range of positive feelings about using AI in their speaking lessons, with several recurring themes; first, Personalized and Flexible Practice, many students highlight the flexibility that AI tools offer, allowing them to practice anytime and anywhere. AL, for instance, mentioned that using AI is a “game-changer” as it lets him practice without the fear of making mistakes in front of others. This flexibility allows students to experiment with new phrases

or expressions in a low-pressure environment, reducing anxiety commonly associated with speaking practice. Second, Pronunciation and Fluency Improvement: Another important benefit is the immediate feedback provided by AI tools. Efen shared that speech recognition software helps him recognize pronunciation mistakes and improve after a few tries. This constant feedback makes AI tools highly effective in helping students refine their pronunciation and fluency. Similarly, AP noted that he initially had doubts about AI but later began to rely on it for its ability to offer quick feedback on his pronunciation and fluency. Third, Building Confidence, WL and AP both mentioned that AI tools boost their confidence. WL finds AI helpful in simulating conversations, which makes speaking practice easier and less judgmental. AP added that AI-driven conversations allow him to improve fluency by repeating dialogues multiple times. This increase in confidence is crucial for language learners, as it encourages them to practice more frequently without the fear of judgment or mistakes. Overall, students feel that AI integration in speaking lessons provides them with a more supportive, engaging, and effective way to practice speaking skills, particularly in pronunciation, fluency, and building confidence.

While students appreciate the benefits of AI tools, they also encounter several challenges, such as Accent and Pronunciation Issues: One significant challenge is that AI tools may not always understand different accents. EL expressed concern that AI sometimes gives incorrect feedback due to difficulties understanding his accent. This issue can lead to frustration and inaccurate feedback, which may hinder students' progress. Limited Understanding of Context and Emotion: Some students feel that AI cannot fully understand the context and emotions within conversations. WL, for instance, finds AI interactions useful but points out that the technology struggles with more complex conversational nuances like emotion or context. This limitation can prevent AI from providing the in-depth feedback that human teachers offer, particularly in real-life scenarios where subtlety is key. The third is a lack of Detailed Explanations: Another concern is that AI tools may provide feedback that feels too mechanical or superficial. AP mentioned that while the feedback is often helpful, it sometimes lacks the depth needed to address more complex language nuances. This is a common issue among students who rely on AI tools to refine their speaking skills but find that AI does not always provide the kind of detailed explanations or personalized guidance that a human instructor would. Fourth, Overreliance on AI: Some students, like YB, worry about becoming too dependent on AI for language practice. They fear that because AI does not always pick up on specific mistakes, such as nuanced pronunciation errors, they may miss out on personalized feedback from a teacher that could help them improve more effectively. Fifth, Robotic Conversations: Finally, a few students miss the natural flow of speaking with humans. Yuli finds the AI interactions too robotic at times, which reduces the authenticity of the conversational experience. This lack of natural interaction can make it harder for students to fully prepare for real-world conversations, where spontaneity and emotional expression are important. Despite these challenges, students still find AI tools to be a valuable resource for practicing speaking, particularly for pronunciation and fluency, even though they acknowledge that human interaction cannot be entirely replaced.

Conclusion

The integration of AI tools into speaking instruction has brought about a transformative change in language learning, offering both anomaly and greater opportunities for students to practice independently. By providing personalized feedback and allowing learners to engage

in a non-pressuring environment, AI tools have become a valuable resource for developing fundamental speaking skills. This technology helps address common challenges in language acquisition, such as improving pronunciation, increasing confidence, and encouraging continued learning outside of the traditional classroom environment. However, while the benefits of AI in enhancing speaking practice are clear, its limitations highlight the need for further development. Current AI tools often struggle to fully mimic the complexities of human communication, particularly in recognizing accents, understanding conversational nuances, and providing contextualized feedback. These shortcomings underscore the importance of refining AI systems to better meet the diverse linguistic needs of students and to provide more authentic, human-like interactions.

Ultimately, while AI tools play an important role in supporting language learners, they cannot be considered a replacement for human instruction. Instead, the most effective approach lies in combining the power of AI with traditional teaching methods. This hybrid model allows students to benefit from the efficiency and scalability of AI while still receiving the nuanced and empathetic guidance that only a human instructor can provide. As AI technology continues to advance, fostering language learning will likely expand, contributing to a more comprehensive and adaptive learning environment for students around the world.

References

- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328-344.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), 80-92.
- Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The status of method: Flexibility, consistency, and coherence. *Qualitative Research*, 3(3), 345-357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794103033004>
- Huang, Y., Liu, Y., & Chen, Y. (2021). The role of AI in language learning: A systematic review. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 34(3), 239-262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2020.1804856>
- Lee, J., McKenzie, M., & Kim, H. (2020). AI-assisted language learning: A review of recent literature. *Educational Technology & Society*, 23(1), 30-45.
- Seidman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Wang, T. (2022). Understanding students' attitudes toward AI in language education. *Journal of Educational Technology & Society*, 25(2), 123-136.