USING AI TOOLS TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract: This article explores the role of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in enhancing speaking skills among foreign language learners. It examines how modern AI-powered applications, such as speech recognition systems, chatbots, and virtual assistants, provide learners with interactive, personalized, and real-time speaking practice. The study highlights the advantages of AI tools, including immediate feedback, increased learner autonomy, and reduced anxiety during communication. Additionally, the article discusses challenges such as technological limitations, lack of emotional interaction, and accessibility issues. The findings suggest that integrating AI tools into language learning environments can significantly improve learners’ pronunciation, fluency, and confidence in speaking.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), speaking skills, foreign language learning, speech recognition, chatbots, virtual assistants, pronunciation, fluency, language education, digital learning tools.

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed the field of education, particularly language learning. Traditional methods of improving speaking skills in a foreign language often relied on classroom interaction, textbooks, and limited real-life communication opportunities. However, many learners face challenges such as lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and insufficient practice outside the classroom. AI-powered tools have emerged as an innovative solution to these problems, offering interactive, flexible, and personalized environments for practicing speaking skills. These tools enable learners to engage in continuous practice, receive instant feedback, and develop their communication abilities more effectively than ever before.

Main part

AI tools provide a variety of opportunities for foreign language learners to improve their speaking skills (Chapelle, 2001). One of the most important advantages is the use of speech recognition technology. Applications like language learning platforms can analyze learners’ pronunciation and compare it with native speaker models (Beatty, 2013). For example, when a learner pronounces a word incorrectly, the system immediately detects the error and suggests corrections. This immediate feedback helps learners quickly identify and fix their mistakes, which is often not possible in traditional classroom settings due to time limitations.

Another powerful AI-based tool is chatbots and virtual assistants. These tools simulate real-life conversations and allow learners to practice speaking in a safe and stress-free environment (Li, 2020). For instance, a learner can engage in a dialogue with a chatbot about daily topics such as ordering food, traveling, or introducing oneself. Unlike human interaction, learners do not feel embarrassed or afraid of making mistakes when speaking with AI, which

reduces anxiety and increases confidence. Over time, this consistent practice leads to improved fluency and spontaneity in speech.

AI tools also support personalized learning. Each learner has different strengths, weaknesses, and learning speeds. AI systems can track a learner’s progress and adapt the difficulty level of tasks accordingly (Zhao, 2019). For example, if a learner struggles with pronunciation, the system may provide more speaking exercises focused on phonetics and intonation. This individualized approach ensures that learners receive targeted practice, making their learning process more efficient and effective.

In addition, AI tools often include interactive features such as voice-based games, role-playing scenarios, and real-time conversation simulations. These features make learning more engaging and enjoyable (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012). For example, a role-play scenario might require a learner to act as a customer in a hotel or a passenger at an airport, encouraging them to use practical vocabulary and expressions. Such activities not only improve speaking skills but also prepare learners for real-world communication situations.

Despite these advantages, there are some limitations to using AI tools. One major drawback is the lack of emotional intelligence and human interaction. AI cannot fully understand context, emotions, or cultural nuances in the same way humans do (Holmes, Bialik, & Fadel, 2019). As a result, learners may miss out on important aspects of communication, such as body language and emotional expression. Additionally, access to advanced AI tools may be limited in some regions due to technological or financial constraints.

However, research and practical experience show that when AI tools are used alongside traditional teaching methods, they can greatly enhance speaking skills (Wang & Petrina, 2013). For example, students who regularly practice with AI applications tend to demonstrate better pronunciation, increased confidence, and greater fluency compared to those who rely solely on classroom learning.

Beyond individual practice, AI tools are increasingly being integrated into collaborative and immersive learning environments. One notable development is the use of AI in virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) platforms for language learning. These technologies create realistic environments where learners can practice speaking in context-rich situations. For example, a learner can virtually “visit” a foreign country, interact with digital characters, ask for directions, or participate in social conversations. This type of immersive learning enhances not only speaking skills but also cultural awareness and pragmatic language use.

Another important aspect is the role of AI in pronunciation training through phonetic visualization. Advanced AI tools can display visual representations of sound waves, mouth movements, and intonation patterns. Learners can compare their pronunciation with native speakers in a highly detailed way (Beatty, 2013). For instance, when practicing difficult sounds in English, such as “th” or “r,” learners receive both auditory and visual feedback, making it easier to understand and correct errors. This scientific approach to pronunciation training significantly accelerates speaking skill development.

AI also contributes to the development of autonomous learning habits (Godwin-Jones, 2018). Modern learners are no longer dependent solely on teachers; instead, they can use AI tools anytime and anywhere. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for students with busy schedules or limited access to language courses. For example, a learner can practice speaking

during short breaks, commuting time, or at home without needing a partner. Over time, this consistent exposure leads to noticeable improvements in fluency and confidence.

In educational institutions, AI tools are also transforming teaching methodologies. Teachers can use AI-based platforms to monitor students' speaking performance and provide more personalized guidance. For instance, instead of spending classroom time on basic pronunciation correction, teachers can focus on higher-level communication skills such as argumentation, storytelling, and debate. This shift enhances the overall quality of language education (Wang & Petrina, 2013).

Another significant benefit of AI tools is their ability to expose learners to diverse accents and speaking styles. Traditional learning materials often focus on a single standard accent, but AI platforms can provide exposure to various global accents. For example, learners can practice listening and speaking with different English accents such as American, British, or Australian. This prepares them for real-world communication, where they are likely to encounter speakers from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Ellis, 2008).

Moreover, AI encourages active learning through interactive feedback loops. Instead of passively memorizing vocabulary or grammar rules, learners actively engage in speaking tasks and receive corrections in real time. For example, during a simulated conversation, the AI may suggest alternative phrases, correct sentence structure, or recommend more natural expressions. This dynamic interaction promotes deeper learning and better retention (Chapelle, 2001).

Finally, the future of AI in language learning looks highly promising. With continuous advancements in natural language processing and machine learning, AI tools are becoming more accurate, responsive, and human-like. In the near future, learners may interact with highly sophisticated virtual tutors capable of understanding emotions, providing motivational support, and adapting to individual learning styles in real time (Li, 2020).

Conclusion

In summary, artificial intelligence has revolutionized the way foreign language learners develop their speaking skills. Through features such as speech recognition, interactive conversations, personalized feedback, immersive environments, and progress tracking, AI tools offer a comprehensive and effective approach to language learning. While certain limitations exist, such as the lack of emotional interaction and potential accessibility issues, the benefits of AI far outweigh its drawbacks. When combined with traditional teaching methods, AI serves as a powerful tool that enhances fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and overall communicative competence. As technology continues to evolve, AI is expected to play an even more significant role in shaping the future of language education.

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