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Redefining speaking practice through ChatGPT's voice conversation: Towards autonomous and personalized practice

Redefinición de la práctica de la expresión oral mediante la conversación por voz de ChatGPT: hacia una práctica autónoma y personalizada

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Abstract

With the continued change in technology, education has had to innovate to provide relevant instruction, especially in language learning. In this context, students face challenges like limited time, restricted access to native speakers, and the lack of feedback or confidence in practicing their speaking skills. Consequently, ChatGPT with its voice feature, has removed these barriers and changed the way students learn a language. This study investigated what students' perceptions are about traditional ways of practicing speaking in comparison with ChatGPT for personalized and autonomous language learning. The study was centered on personalization and autonomy, analyzing the students' perceptions as they interacted with ChatGPT. Likewise, it assessed the tool's impact on students and its potential to improve their speaking skills. Data was collected through pre- and post-surveys to know students' perceptions after two sessions with ChatGPT. A pragmatic qualitative method was applied for data analysis. The results showed that students felt more comfortable with ChatGPT, as it allowed them to practice in an interactive, non-judgmental, and supportive environment. Participants mentioned less anxiety and a willingness to continue practicing with the AI tool. It becomes fundamentally important to implement AI methods into language learning and suggest further possible research into the long-term impacts of emergent technologies, as well as accessibility in resource-limited educational contexts.

Keywords: AI-assisted learning; ChatGPT; Personalized Learning; EFL students; AI speaking Students' Perceptions

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Resumen

Con el cambio continuo de la tecnología, la educación ha innovado, sobretodo en cómo se adquiere un idioma para así ofrecer una educación acorde. En este contexto los estudiantes se han enfrentado a problemáticas como tiempo limitado, acceso restringido a hablantes nativos y falta de retroalimentación. En respuesta, el aprendizaje asistido por IA, específicamente la función de conversación por voz de ChatGPT, ha eliminado esto y ha cambiado la forma en que los estudiantes aprenden un idioma. Esta investigación exploró las percepciones de los estudiantes acerca de métodos tradicionales para practicar speaking, en comparación con el uso de ChatGPT para el aprendizaje autónomo y personalizado. El estudio se centró en dos aspectos fundamentales: la personalización y la autonomía, analizando la experiencia de los estudiantes con ChatGPT. Así mismo, se indago acerca del impacto de la herramienta en los estudiantes y su capacidad para desarrollar habilidades de speaking. Los datos se recopilaron con una encuesta previa y posterior para conocer las percepciones en comparación a métodos tradicionales frente al uso de ChatGPT. Se aplicó un método cualitativo pragmático en la investigación. Los resultados revelaron que los estudiantes se sentían más cómodos con ChatGPT, debido a que practicaban en un entorno interactivo, sin juicios y de apoyo. Los participantes manifestaron sentirse menos ansiosos y expresaron el deseo de practicar autónomamente. La investigación destaca la importancia de incorporar métodos de IA en el aprendizaje de lenguas, así como investigar el impacto a largo plazo, en contextos educativos con escasos recursos tecnológicos.

Palabras Clave Aprendizaje asistido por IA; ChatGPT; Aprendizaje personalizado; Estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL); Percepciones de los estudiantes sobre la función de habla de la AI.

Introduction

Communication is essential to human interaction, and speaking skills play an important role. For EFL learners, developing this skill is one of the main objectives as it allows them to use the language in real-life situations (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Traditionally, language teaching has been in charge of specialized professionals (Zavala, 2023). However, with globalization and technological advances, the process of acquiring a new language has significantly changed, offering a wide variety of options such as online courses, videos, digital books, and interactive platforms, focusing on autonomous learning (Warschauer & Xu, 2024). One of the main difficulties autonomous learning faces is the lack of consistency, effective feedback, and opportunities to practice pronunciation and fluency, which require personalized instructional support. In this context, technology has created significant opportunities, particularly through artificial intelligence (AI), which has transformed language teaching (Edmett et al., 2024). AI provides personalized experiences and offers immediate feedback in many aspects, like grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation accuracy. This allows EFL students to adapt to the rhythm of their learning and allows them to focus on individual needs.

ChatGPT's voice conversation feature is one of the most promising tools with the advancements in AI. It gives EFL learners real-time, customized speaking opportunities (Shazhaev et al., 2023). Recent research in language education reveals an essential trend: computer-assisted learning systems using artificial intelligence consistently create more participative and dynamic environments compared to traditional approaches. Especially when there are many students in a classroom (Divekar, 2021). In addition, this contributes to having students more motivated and enthusiastic during the language learning process. The platforms and apps with AI booster

listening and speaking abilities. These platforms offer engaging learning by simulating real-life situations using natural language processing (Hapsari & Wu, 2022). Although the advantages are significant, there are considerations that people should contemplate when applying this technology in the language learning process. The limitation remains the need to mitigate cultural and linguistic biases while improving the capability to adapt them to diverse learning styles and proficiency gaps (Dávila et al., 2024).

Emerging studies have analyzed how the use of AI in the acquisition of languages has changed the way L2 students learn a new language autonomously. The findings demonstrated that these tools significantly reduce the fear of speaking by offering interactive and immersive environments (Hapsari & Wu, 2022). The pioneering research of Pratiwi et al. (2024), identified key advantages in AI tools like ChatGPT with voice features, where L2 students have unlimited practice in relaxing scenarios, immediate feedback in pronunciation and grammar accuracy, and the option to adapt the user level, overcoming the limitations that the traditional methods currently have. However, alternative studies examine the efficacy of AI approaches in comparison with conventional approaches. Traditional methods rely on teacher-led speaking activities and peer interactions in the classroom. AI tools such as ChatGPT offer unlimited speaking opportunities and flexibility, which is a key factor for students who cannot practice enough in class or do not receive much feedback (Divekar, 2021).

Previous research has emphasized the role of AI, especially ChatGPT, to learn a language with AI assistance. Furthermore, the increasing presence of AI in education has motivated an analysis of ChatGPT's capabilities for personalized, interactive, and efficient language instruction. However, a common assumption when people implement new technologies in the classroom is that they will be effective or beneficial for students without considering the insights of the people involved in the process (Copland et al., 2014). Research has not yet explored the overall impact of AI on language learning. Additionally, there is limited data on students' perceptions of using the ChatGPT voice conversation feature in the classroom. In addition, understanding the perceptions could guide educators to implement technologies effectively.

The study was designed to explore how ChatGPT was perceived by students in terms of its effects on students´ speaking skills, by presenting it to them as a potential language-learning tool. Data collection techniques included a pre-survey to examine students' perceptions as they related to traditional speaking activities, and a post-survey to examine students' impressions of using ChatGPT's voice conversation feature following two class sessions that utilized the tool. The study involved students from 8th grade "A" from Unidad Educativa Vigotsky while focusing on two key research questions: how do EFL students perceive the effectiveness of traditional practices that are implemented to increase their speaking skills and confidence? And what do they think about ChatGPT as a voice conversation tool to enhance their autonomous and personalized learning experiences?

Traditional Approaches to Language Teaching.

Over the years, there have been numerous approaches and methods for teaching languages around the world, such as audiolingualism and situational language teaching, to name a few. These approaches had an emphasis on grammatical competence as the foundation of language proficiency because they believed grammar could be taught in class through direct instruction, repetition, practice, and drills (Richards, 2006). However, these methods were often criticized because they focused more on accuracy instead of communication (Larsen & Anderson, 2011).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

According to Alamari (2018), in the 1970s, a reaction began in language teaching as traditional grammar-focused methods were argued because language involved more than proficiency and grammatical competence. As a result, the communicative competence approach emerged. Savignon (1976), stated that it is the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning, with an emphasis on helping language learners gain knowledge of the language and use that language effectively.

In this regard, the objective of the Communicative Language Teaching approach is to promote students' speaking skill development via several meaningful activities in which they are able to practice the target language (Brown, 2007).

The Role of Technology in Language Learning.

With the integration of technology in language learning, traditional methods have changed, and innovative tools have supported the development of speaking skills. Bahadorfar et al. (2014), state that technological tools like the internet, podcasts, video conferencing, videos, and speech recognition software are considered the most effective resources for teaching speaking skills. The use of these resources has been noted as an effective method to assist students in developing their language skills, especially the tools that offer the opportunity to communicate in real-time and practice their speaking abilities.

Artificial Intelligence in Language Learning

Artificial Intelligence is a field of computer science dedicated to developing intelligent machines that are capable of thinking, interacting, and acting like humans. This kind of system is constantly adapting due to the fact it learns from human interactions and automatically redefines its capability for solving problems based on its experiences (Deng & Lin, 2023). AI has been incorporated into educational contexts to offer adaptive learning with the use of chatbots or tutoring systems that can boost the learning experience by providing real-time feedback (Olabiyi, 2024).

Natural Language Processing (NLP)

Natural Language Processing (NLP), a subfield of artificial intelligence that is centered on the computationally-based understanding of linguistics, covers a variety of textual and audio interpretations through the application of machine learning methods. AI-driven tools like ChatGPT offer the L2 the opportunity to engage in authentic, immersive, and personalized dialogues, helping to develop and boost their language skills thanks to the feedback they can receive immediately (Jurafsky & Martin, 2008).

ChatGPT and Language Learning

In November 2022, OpenAI launched the Generative Pre-Trained Transformer, or ChatGPT. This conversational model was developed to create text from an initial prompt or instruction. It makes a valuable tool for conversational uses such as chatbots, customer service agents, and virtual assistants. This model has been trained with an extensive collection of conversational data, from websites and books to social media platforms. Consequently, it has the ability to create coherent text, contextualized, relevant, and often similar to those produced by humans (Deng & Lin, 2023).

ChatGPT's Voice Conversation

In September 2023, OpenAI presented a new function focused on paid users, the voice interaction feature. This functionality allowed communication in real-time through spoken language. Later, on November 21, 2023, OpenAI expanded access to this functionality, making it available for all free users. This implementation expanded the platform's versatility, allowing people to interact with ChatGPT using both written and spoken commands, which greatly boosted the overall experience (Huang, 2024).

Methodology

This investigation employed a pragmatic qualitative method, focusing on the exploration of practical solutions to real-world problems (Gobo, 2023). In a similar way, a qualitative methodology prioritizes insights into people's perceptions and social interactions of students in a specific environment (Ugwu, 2023). Thus, the pragmatic qualitative methodology is particularly valuable for describing the students' opinions on established speaking techniques and their responses to using ChatGPT's voice conversation function. Moreover, this study employed two surveys as tools for recollecting data. Initially, a pre-survey was administered to gather students' opinions concerning traditional methods such as role-playing, pair work, and group discussion. This pre-survey had 10 questions divided into three categories: (1) confidence and comfort in speaking English

in the classroom, (2) the impact of traditional methodologies on speaking development, and (3) preferences and perceptions of traditional teaching methods for speaking. The purpose of this instrument was to comprehend how students perceive these conventional methods for learning languages and developing speaking skills.

The second questionnaire involved a post-survey applied after two sessions of using ChatGPT's voice conversation capability. This questionnaire included 12 items categorized into six groups (1) impact of ChatGPT on confidence and motivation, (2) personalization of learning and topic relevance, (3) comparison between ChatGPT and traditional methods, (4) development and improvement of speaking skills with ChatGPT and (5) potential of ChatGPT for autonomous practice. The final section incorporated two open questions to get general students' perceptions after using ChatGPT. A thematic coding approach was employed to organize their responses, identify recurring patterns in students' perceptions, and offer valuable insights as a tool for personalization for speaking development through the assignment of descriptive labels (McLeod, 2024).

Before the full implementation of ChatGPT sessions with the students, there was a pilot stage that was applied to three students from a different course; they were chosen considering their age and English level in similarity with the main group of study. That phase aimed to assess the accuracy and efficiency of the ChatGPT prompts. After that process, the prompts were adjusted to improve the interactive experience. These revisions included using ChatGPT not only for making a single question but also expanding to many topics, encouraging deeper engagement from the user. Furthermore, ChatGPT's instructions were modified to produce extra questions, promoting interactive conversations and not just limited to answering "yes" or "no". Finally, the tool was directed to employ appropriate grammar and vocabulary for students at the A1 level.

For the purpose of identifying differences from different contexts, ChatGPT was applied in two separate sessions. After this process, a questionnaire was administered and then analyzed with particular attention to qualitative descriptions. Additionally, both surveys included a Likert scale to enable a descriptive analysis revealing trends and recurrent topics in students' responses concerning their opinions and experiences. A convenience sampling method was selected to choose the participants. This method prioritizes the selection of participants from the target population, focused on availability and easy access (Golzar, 2022). The participants groups consisted of 28 students from the 8th grade A class of the "Unidad Educativa Vigotsky Riobamba". The sample included 14 girls and 14 boys. These students were chosen due to the accessibility and availability of the students. In addition, ethical procedures were observed during this study, which included submitting a consent form to the school´s principal for approval and obtaining support during the research. Information about the study process was shared with the students' parents, ensuring they could provide the necessary equipment for the sessions with ChatGPT, such as computers and headphones.

Results

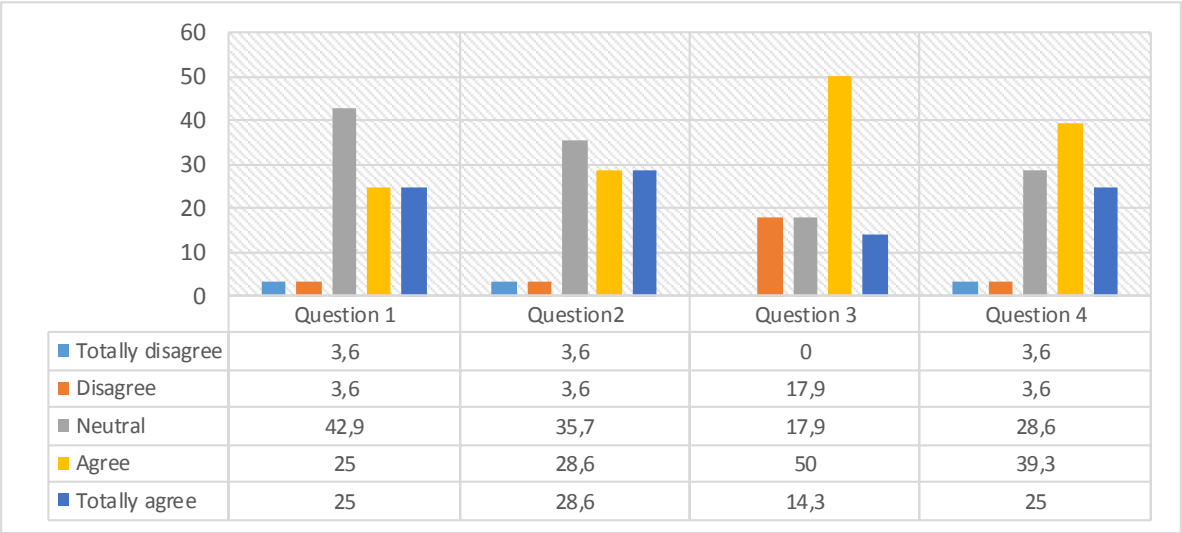
The researcher applied a preliminary survey to explore how the conversations with ChatGPT's voice conversation feature are related to the traditional methods used to teach English to EFL students. A total of 28 students took part in the survey to recollect the participants' perceptions of traditional practices in speaking. The students' responses were given labels to analyze accurately: (1) confidence and comfort in speaking English in the classroom, (2) the impact of traditional methodologies on speaking development, and (3) preferences and perceptions of traditional teaching methods for speaking.

Pre-Survey results

First category: Confidence and comfort in speaking English in the classroom

Figure 1 illustrates the data from the first category focused on students' confidence and comfort when speaking English in the classroom.

Figure 1. Confidence and comfort when speaking English in the classroom



	Question 1	Question2	Question 3	Question 4
Totally disagree	3,6	3,6	0	3,6
Disagree	3,6	3,6	17,9	3,6
Neutral	42,9	35,7	17,9	28,6
Agree	25	28,6	50	39,3
Totally agree	25	28,6	14,3	25

Source: own elaboration.

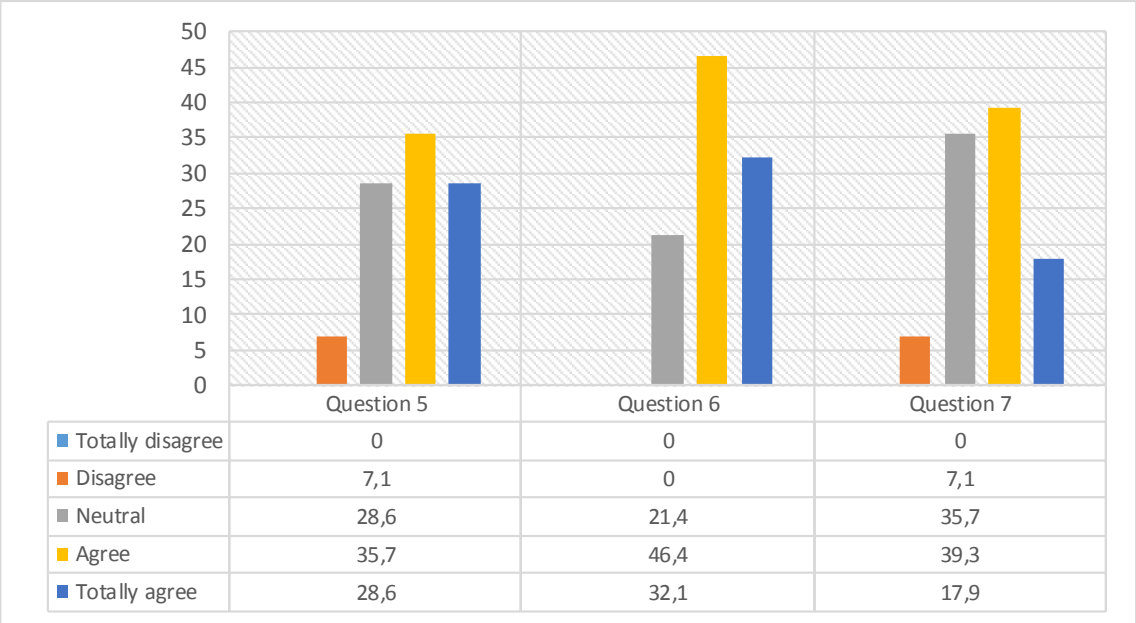
According to the results of the first question, 7.2% of the respondents said they disagreed with feeling secure when speaking English in the classroom using traditional methods such as role-plays, classroom discussions, and pair work. While 42.9% remained neutral, the remainder of the respondents agreed with this statement. The second question explored how traditional classroom methods could help develop students' confidence in speaking English in public. A total of 7.2% disagreed with this idea, while 35.7% stayed neutral; on the other hand, 57.2% of respondents believed that traditional methods were helpful. The third question focused on pronunciation and accuracy in speaking English; 17.9% questioned the statement, while 17.9% showed a neutral position. Meanwhile, 64.3% of students supported the belief that traditional methods help to develop

pronunciation in the classroom. Finally, concerning question four about speaking opportunities in class, 7.2% of students expressed opposition to this statement, while 28.6% took a neutral stance. Lastly, 64.3% stated that they had enough opportunities to speak during classes.

Second category: The impact of traditional methodologies on speaking development

Regarding perceptions of the impact of traditional methods on practicing the language for real situations from question 5, 7.1% of students disagreed with the idea that they could practice real-life situations in the classroom, while 28.6% remained impartial. The remaining 64% supported the statement (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The impact of traditional methodologies on speaking development



	Question 5	Question 6	Question 7
Totally disagree	0	0	0
Disagree	7,1	0	7,1
Neutral	28,6	21,4	35,7
Agree	35,7	46,4	39,3
Totally agree	28,6	32,1	17,9

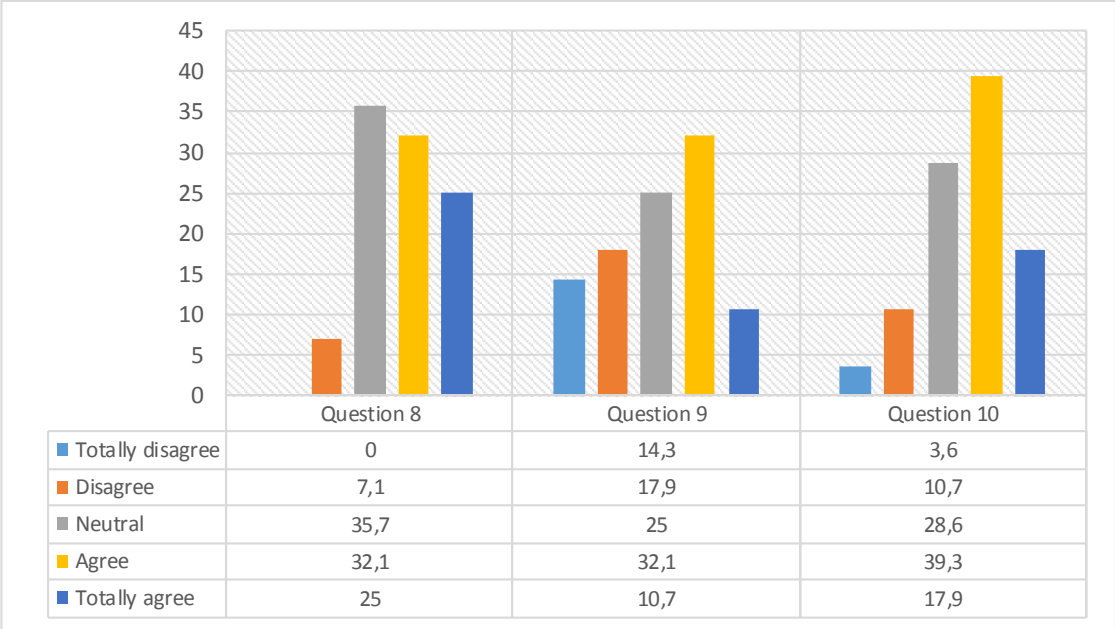
Source: own elaboration.

When assessing question 6 about the feedback received from their teachers during speaking activities to improve speaking, none of the students rejected the idea that they did not receive enough feedback to improve their speaking skills. While 21.4% neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, 75% affirmed that they received enough feedback from the teacher during the sessions. The seventh question centered on the effectiveness of the traditional methods in preparing students to use the language in real-world scenarios outside the classroom; 7.1% disagreed and 35.7% remained impartial regarding the effectiveness of the traditional methods in such situations. On the other hand, the rest of the respondents (57.2%) mostly agreed.

Third category: Preferences and perceptions of traditional teaching methods for speaking

Figure 3 shows data that focuses on student preferences and perceptions of traditional methods. Question 8 asked if conventional activities allowed students to practice the language through activities of their interest. Of the 28 students who participated in the pre-survey, 7.1% considered that they did not practice with activities of interest, 35,7% took a neutral stance, and the remainder (57.1%) expressed agreement with the statement.

Figure 3. Preferences and perceptions of traditional teaching methods for speaking.



	Question 8	Question 9	Question 10
Totally disagree	0	14,3	3,6
Disagree	7,1	17,9	10,7
Neutral	35,7	25	28,6
Agree	32,1	32,1	39,3
Totally agree	25	10,7	17,9

Source: own elaboration.

In question 9, approximately one-third of the respondents (32.2%) disagreed that they had a preference for traditional methods over technological tools to learn English, while 25% remained neutral. Additionally, 42.8% indicated they prefer traditional methods for learning a language. Regarding students' satisfaction with traditional methods and their expectations for developing speaking skills in question 10, 14.3% expressed disapproval of conventional methods in fulfilling their expectations for speaking activities, while 28.6% remained undecided. Despite these differing views, 57.2% largely supported the idea that traditional methods fulfilled their expectations for speaking development.

The pre-survey results revealed moderate degrees of satisfaction among the students surveyed regarding the efficacy of traditional methods in helping foster speaking skills in the EFL classroom. While very few respondents reported feeling uncomfortable with conventional methods, they mentioned that they had many opportunities to practice real-life speaking situations in class, and more than half indicated a preference for traditional methods for language learning.

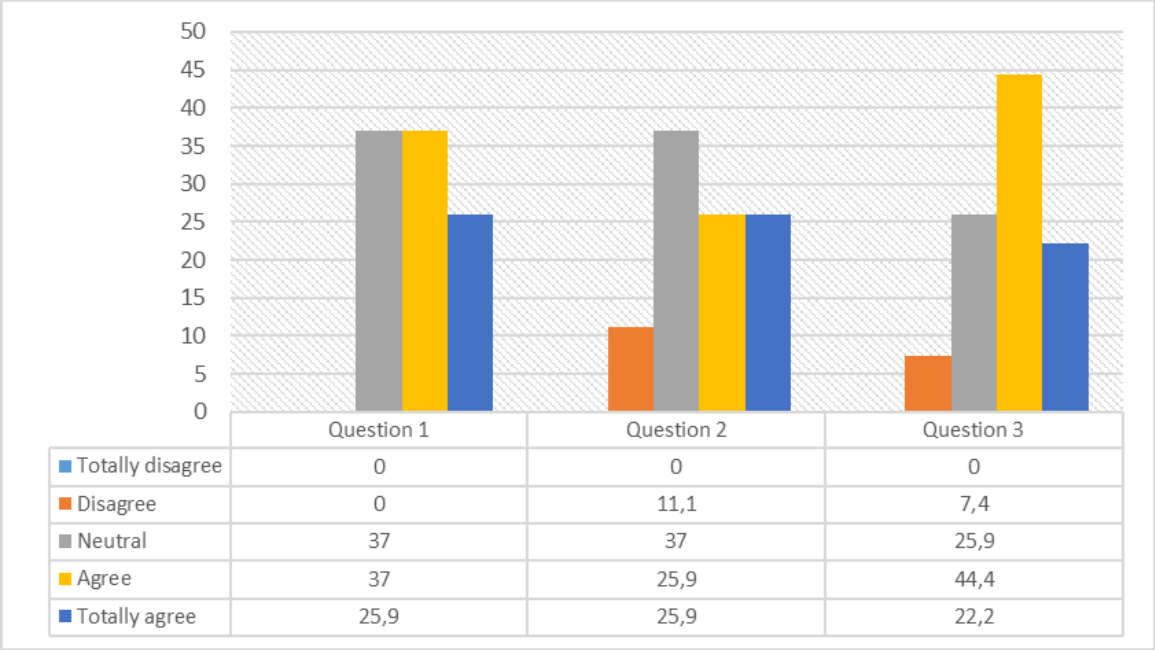
Post-survey results regarding the use of ChatGPT's voice conversation feature.

This study had a post-survey that was applied to the students after two sessions of using ChatGPT with its voice conversation feature to get the students' perceptions through AI-assisted approaches for speaking development in the EFL context. The 28 students from the pre-survey took part in the ChatGPT sessions and thereafter answered the second instrument about the experience with the use of ChatGPT with its voice conversation feature.

First category: The impact of ChatGPT on the confidence and motivation of EFL students.

Figure 4 presents the data from the first category centered on the impact of the ChatGPT voice conversation feature and motivation on students.

Figure 4. The impact of ChatGPT on confidence and motivation of EFL students.



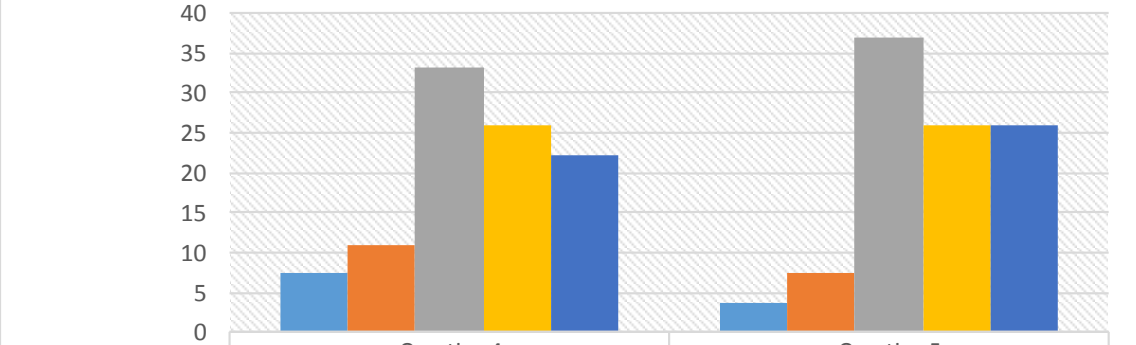
	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
Totally disagree	0	0	0
Disagree	0	11,1	7,4
Neutral	37	37	25,9
Agree	37	25,9	44,4
Totally agree	25,9	25,9	22,2

Source: own elaboration.

As stated by the post-survey results, regarding the first question about whether using ChatGPT has improved confidence in speaking English, none reported disagreement, while 37% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 62.9% were in favor of the statement. The second question examined how ChatGPT influenced students' motivation to practice English autonomously, with 11.1% contradicting the statement, 37% remaining neutral, and 51.8% acknowledging that ChatGPT enhanced their motivation for autonomous learning. When the students were asked whether ChatGPT created a no-judgment environment to practice English, which corresponds to the third question, 7.4% disagreed, 25.9% did not take a side, and 66.6% believed they could practice English without judgment.

Second category: Personalization of Learning and Topic Relevance.

Figure 5. Personalization of learning and topic relevance



	Question 4	Question 5
Totally disagree	7,4	3,7
Disagree	11,1	7,4
Neutral	33,3	37
Agree	25,9	25,9
Totally agree	22,2	25,9

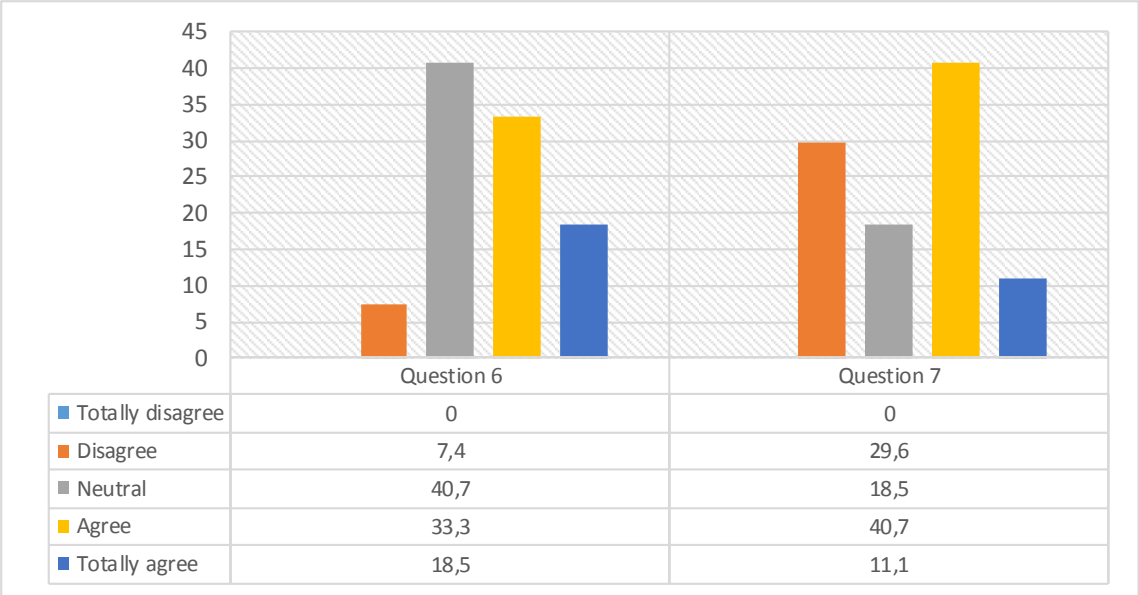
Source: own elaboration.

Concerning learning personalization and relevant topics and scenarios for students in question 4, 18.5% of students rejected the idea that they could practice topics of interest to them, while 33.3% remained impartial, and 48.1% expressed agreement with the statement (see Figure 5). According to the results of question 5, ChatGPT helped to identify specific areas where students need to improve their speaking skills. 11.1% did not believe that the tool helped to identify key areas for improvement, 37% were undecided about the statement, while the remaining 51.8% of respondents agreed.

Third category: Comparison between ChatGPT and traditional methods.

Figure 6 illustrates the data from the third category, which compares conventional methods with ChatGPT.

Figure 6. Comparison between ChatGPT and traditional methods.



	Question 6	Question 7
Totally disagree	0	0
Disagree	7,4	29,6
Neutral	40,7	18,5
Agree	33,3	40,7
Totally agree	18,5	11,1

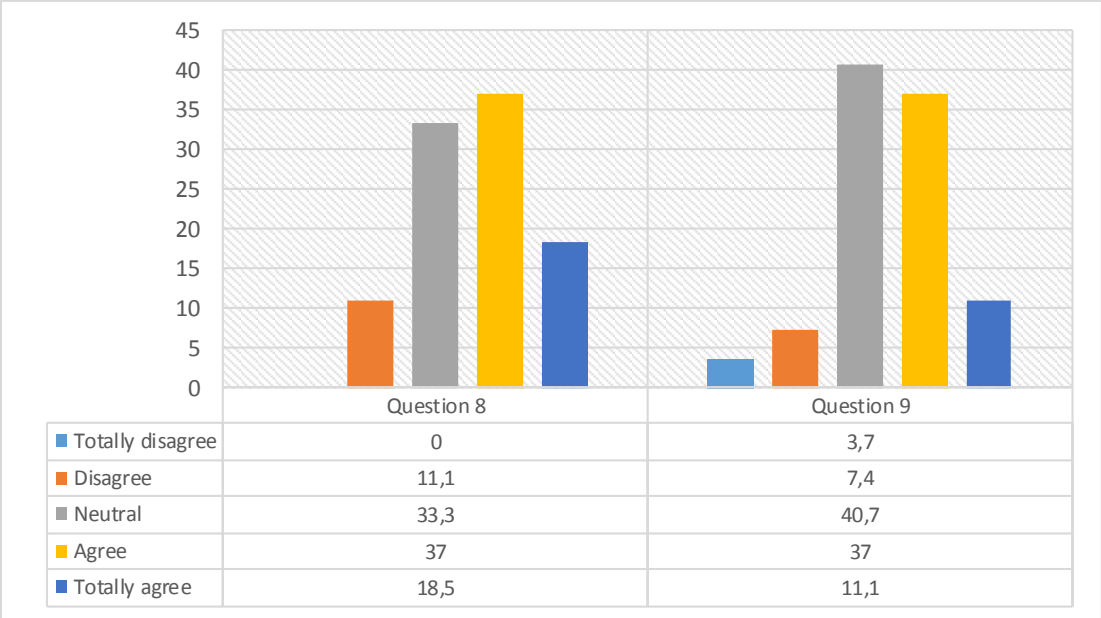
Source: own elaboration.

Question 6 explored whether ChatGPT could effectively complement traditional approaches to developing speaking skills. 7.4% disagreed, while 40.7% provided non-committal responses, and the remaining students agreed that ChatGPT could support traditional methods. Concerning the effectiveness of ChatGPT compared to traditional methods for practicing speaking in question 7, 29.6% disagreed, 18.5% stayed neutral, and 51.8% supported the belief that ChatGPT is an effective tool.

Fourth category: Development and Improvement of Speaking Skills with ChatGPT.

Regarding the development and improvement of speaking skills with ChatGPT, in question 8, 11.1% of respondents disagreed that ChatGPT could provide appropriate feedback to improve their speaking, while 33.3% remained impartial. The remaining 55.5% supported the statement (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. Development and improvement of speaking skills with ChatGPT.



	Question 8	Question 9
Totally disagree	0	3,7
Disagree	11,1	7,4
Neutral	33,3	40,7
Agree	37	37
Totally agree	18,5	11,1

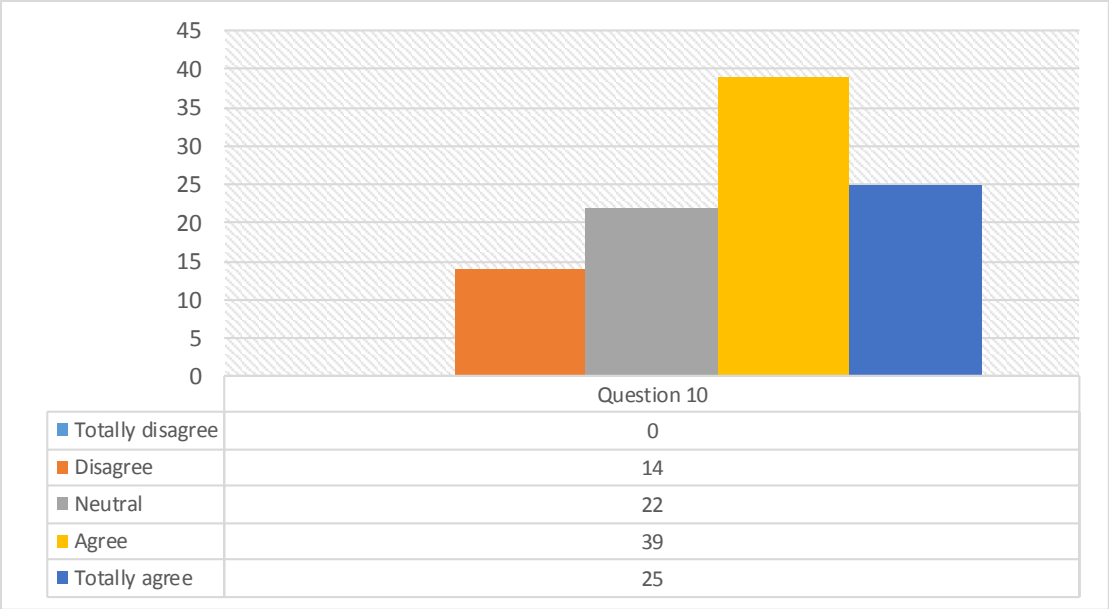
Source: own elaboration.

The last question from this category explored the students' perceptions of whether ChatGPT improved their capability to communicate in English in real-life situations. 10.8% opposed the idea of ChatGPT improving their speaking skills, 40.7% neither agreed nor disagreed with this idea, and 48% affirmed they could improve their skills using ChatGPT's voice conversation.

Fifth category: The Potential of ChatGPT for Autonomous Practice.

Ultimately, Figure 8 reveals data that focuses on the potential that ChatGPT has for autonomous practice. 14% expressed disapproval of ChatGPT being used as a tool for practicing speaking independently, while 22% remained undecided. On the other hand, 64% strongly supported the idea that the tool can help them improve their speaking skills autonomously.

Figure 8. The potential of ChatGPT for autonomous practice.



Source: own elaboration.

To summarize, the post-survey results revealed that most students considered ChatGPT a helpful tool for enhancing speaking skills, as they reported higher motivation for autonomous practice. In addition, the majority appreciated the no-judgment environment ChatGPT provided. However, some respondents remained neutral or disagreed with aspects, such as the comparison between methods.

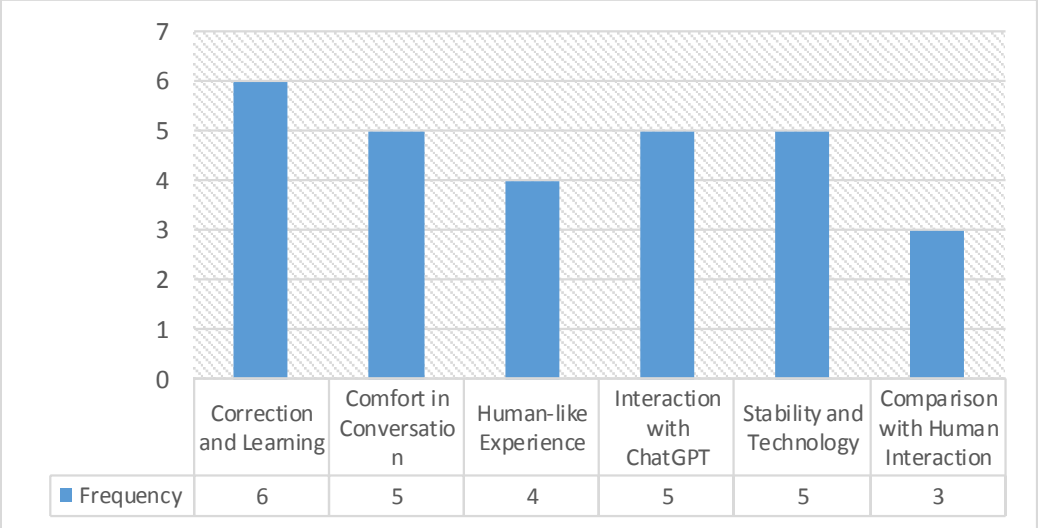
Sixth category: Open questions post-survey

In the post-survey, two open-ended questions were included to gather students' general perceptions after using ChatGPT's voice conversation feature. In addition, all students' comments were organized into categories using coding to identify patterns in the responses.

What did you like the most about ChatGPT's voice conversation feature?

The first question aimed to explore what students liked the most about the tool. Responses highlighted comments, corrections, and learning (6 answers), as several students valued ChatGPT's ability to provide immediate corrections which helped them improve their pronunciation (see Figure 9). Concerning comfort in conversation (5 answers) and fluid and dynamic interaction (5 answers), students valued the experience of showing comfort using it and they commented, "I can communicate without fear and judgments" or "When I made a mistake nobody laughed."

Figure 9. What did you like the most about ChatGPT's voice conversation feature?



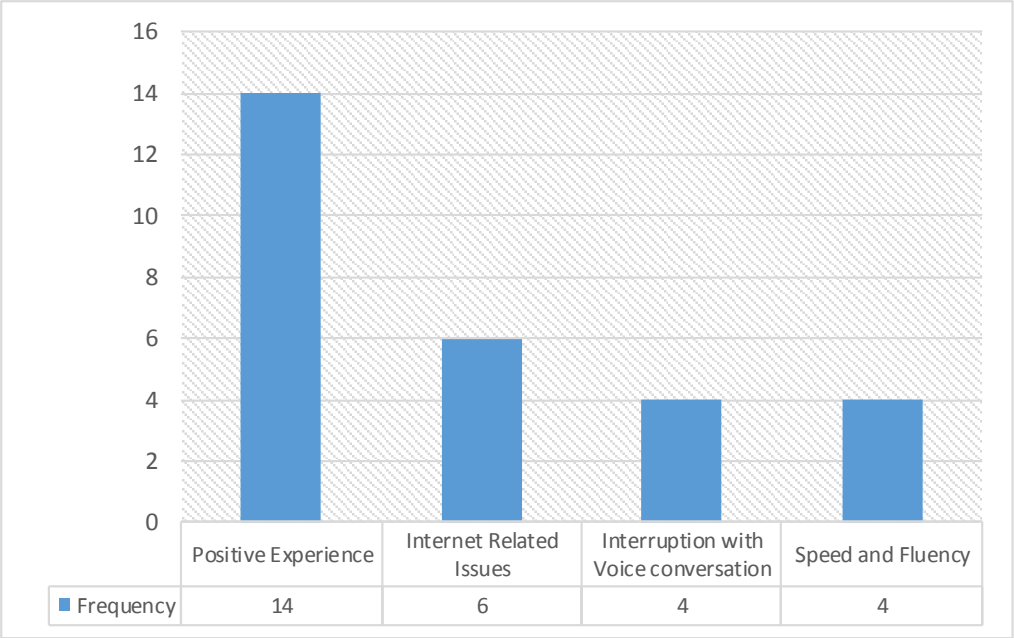
Source: own elaboration.

Regarding the human-like experience (4 answers), they were satisfied because they could have a real conversation similar to a human, and the tool explored more about the topics and kept students talking. The stability and technology (5 answers) was a key aspect where students commented, "I could interact with ChatGPT although there was a lot of noise and the internet was not good enough," or "ChatGPT did not recognize my voice, but I could make the activities." Students' comments compared the interaction with ChatGPT to human interaction (3 answers), where students said, "However, I noticed the difference with a real human interaction; it is not very important because I could practice English and improve."

How would you describe your experience using ChatGPT's voice conversation feature?

Figure 10 represents the data from the second open-ended question, which assessed the students' experience with ChatGPT's voice conversation feature. Their responses were classified into the following categories: Positive experience, internet-related issues, interruption in voice conversation, and speed and fluency. Concerning the first statement, 14 respondents described their experience as good, excellent, or fun, stating that they felt comfortable using ChatGPT's voice conversation feature.

Figure 10. How would you describe your experience using ChatGPT's voice conversation feature?



Source: own elaboration.

Regarding internet-related issues (6 answers), students reported that the poor connection significantly affected their experience because ChatGPT disconnected or failed to understand their instructions. Moreover, concerning to interruption with voice conversation (4 answers) pointed out that the tool frequently interrupted them due to the internet connection. Finally, (4 answers) mentioned that the answer speed and fluency in using ChatGPT were positive. They said that the tool gave accurate, fast, and natural answers, allowing having a natural conversation and interaction with it.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the EFL students' views about traditional methods for language teaching, such as pair work, role-plays, and group discussions, to develop EFL students' confidence in their speaking ability. Likewise, to look into students' perceptions of using ChatGPT to enhance autonomous and individual learning. The study findings showed valuable data concerning EFL students' assumptions of experiences of using ChatGPT voice conversation to develop their speaking abilities in an autonomous and personalized way in comparison with traditional approaches. The findings revealed that even though students appreciate traditional methods such as group discussions, role-plays, and pair work for developing their speaking skills, they expressed interest in continuing to work with AI tools like ChatGPT. This approach highly fostered their fluency, confidence, and communicative abilities.

Although students are used to learning a language through traditional methods such as role-plays, pair work, and group discussions, they expressed a preference for experimenting with

tools that allow them to adapt and personalize their learning according to their style and pace. This shows that using new technologies such as ChatGPT in the classroom would be helpful in managing speaking anxiety and promoting independent learning (Solak, 2024). Students shared that the autonomy given to them by the AI tool, ChatGPT, for example, gave them opportunities to practice their speaking without the immediate pressure of being assessed by a teacher or the presence of their classmates. Perhaps one of the benefits described by students was an increased willingness to speak because learners could practice without fear of being judged negatively.

An unexpected finding was that some students continued to use traditional methods, even with the value benefits of AI tools such as ChatGPT. This shows that, while AI tools offer important advantages to students, a complete transition to the use of emerging technologies in classrooms may take longer for students to transition to and adapt to. Furthermore, there were technical barriers, like poor internet connectivity and innadequate quiet spaces large enough for students to engage with the tool. These factors affected the ability of ChatGPT to clearly understand students' utterances and therefore negatively impacting the overall learning experience for some students.

When comparing these findings with previous research, there are agreements regarding the results, which align with studies emphasizing AI's potential to personalize learning and provide immediate feedback. For example, the current research found that instruction based on AI significantly improves speaking skills and promotes the autoregulation process among language learners (Qiao & Zhao, 2023). In this order, the flexibility and adaptability of AI tools like ChatGPT have been recognized as beneficial tools for autonomous learning development and practicing speaking skills (Solak, 2024).

In opposition, other research presents contradictory findings. Zhang et al. (2024), argue that while AI provides immediate feedback, it cannot replicate or simulate the depth of human interaction necessary for understanding emotional cues. Additionally, concerns have been raised that AI may reduce real-world communication, which is essential for effective language learning (Hohenstein et al., 2023). These findings suggest that combining traditional methods and AI-assisted approaches may be necessary for adequate language development. The study had some limitations. The sample was limited to 28 students, which limited the possibility of generalization the findings. In addition, due to a lack of time in this study, the students were not able to use the tool long enough to evaluate the implications of the use of ChatGPT for developing their speaking skills over a long time regarding speaking fluency. During the sessions with the tool, students experienced technical difficulties related to connecting to the internet; these technical problems could have a negative impact on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the tool.

Future research may consider the long-term impact and effects of using ChatGPT on the outcomes of learning English as a foreign language for students, particularly when learning to speak. In addition, research on how to combine traditional methods with AI could provide beneficial insights for enhancing the language learning process. Also, it is important to look for ways to mitigate successfully the issues with accessibility to technology in certain educational contexts and the challenges they face. In summary, the full implementation of ChatGPT with its voice con-

versation feature for autonomous and personalized learning could support traditional methods since it would provide a flexible and judgment-free environment where students can practice their speaking comfortably. Despite the technical issues and the time that it took for the students to get to know the process, the benefits that the AI tool could provide for the learning process are clear. In this order, this research is relevant to understanding the way that current technologies could enhance language learning, especially for EFL students.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the implementation of AI tools like ChatGPT for acquiring speaking skills in EFL students revealed that students could take advantage of accessibility, personalization, and adaptability to boost their speaking skills. In addition, it provides a safe and tolerant environment where students can practice and interact naturally with the language. The study findings demonstrated that students felt more comfortable in a space where they could practice without the pressure of an evaluation and criticism or punishment from classmates or teachers. As a result, they felt more secure speaking with ChatGPT than in front of lots of people. This outcome implies that the teachers have to consider gradually integrating ChatGPT or AI tools to help students develop their confidence in speaking. Additionally, finding a balance between traditional methods and AI-based approaches would be beneficial for the language learning process in EFL students, allowing them to acquire the skills in an autonomous way.

However, it is important to consider the study's limitations. First, the number of students was limited, and for a unique educational context, this affected the opportunity to generalize the study results. Second, the sessions with ChatGPT were short, and this obstructed the capability to analyze the effects on long-term language learning. Third, technical and accommodation problems, such as internet connectivity and noisy classrooms, did not allow them to interact fully with the tool. In this context, future research should increase the sample size and its diversity to guarantee results that are more significant and conduct studies with ChatGPT over longer periods of time to understand its benefits or effects. Finally, it is essential to investigate how to incorporate AI tools successfully into EFL classrooms to maximize their benefits and overcome the current problems in learning languages. Future studies should explore strategies to ensure the accessibility and effective use of artificial intelligence within educational settings that face constraints in technological resources.

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