# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CHATBOTS AS A TRANSFORMATIVE TOOL FOR DEVELOPING EFL SPEAKING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXTS

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**Abstract**

One way AI is changing classrooms? It's reshaping how foreign language speakers practice talking in English. Despite progress, speaking still trips many learners up - real conversations are rare, while fear and self-doubt often get in the way. To explore this, researchers looked at how chatbots shaped spoken output in college-level English classes. Instead of only surveys or interviews, they combined test scores, live session notes, and feedback forms for richer insight. Over four weeks, students completed guided speaking exercises using automated conversation partners. Before starting and after finishing, each learner took an assessment to measure change. Observers tracked behavior during activities, capturing nuances beyond numbers. Meanwhile, written reflections revealed personal views on ease, difficulty, and perceived growth. The tools used weren't perfect - but patterns emerged across different data sources. Surprisingly, learners who used chatbot exercises showed gains in speech flow, word choice, and self-assurance during conversations. Far from replacing teachers, these tools fit alongside traditional

methods, offering students low-pressure chances to speak more freely. Often overlooked, reduced nervousness while talking emerged as a consistent benefit across responses. With time, repeated interactions seemed to build readiness for real-life exchanges. In classrooms where participation matters, such support may quietly boost engagement without fanfare.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, chatbots, EFL speaking, communicative competence, language anxiety, motivation

**Аннотация**

Совсем по-другому стал процесс освоения языка - теперь искусственный интеллект активно входит в обучение, особенно помогая тем, кто учит английский как иностранный. Говорить вслух даётся труднее всего: мало практики, к тому же мешают внутренние преграды - например, волнение или сомнения в себе. В этой работе анализируется, как именно чат-боты меняют способность студентов говорить свободнее. Эксперимент длился месяц; участники выполняли заранее продуманные упражнения с помощником на базе ИИ. Сбор информации шёл через тестирование до начала и после окончания эксперимента, также велись записи наблюдений и опрос мнений самих обучающихся. Выяснилось: беседы с чат-ботами помогают говорить свободнее, обогащают лексику, прибавляют уверенности - тревога при этом падает. Эти факты указывают на пользу таких программ в университетах как часть учебного процесса.

**Ключевые слова**: искусственный интеллект, чат-боты, устная речь, коммуникативная компетенция, мотивация

**Annotatsiya**

Sun’iy intellekt texnologiyalarining ta’lim tizimiga joriy etilishi til o‘rganish jarayonini, ayniqsa ingliz tilini chet tili sifatida o‘rganuvchilarning gapirish ko‘nikmalarini rivojlantirishda sezilarli darajada o‘zgartirmoqda. Gapirish ko‘nikmasi ko‘plab talabalar uchun murakkab bo‘lib qolmoqda, bunga jonli muloqot imkoniyatlarining cheklanganligi hamda hayajon, qo‘rquv va o‘ziga ishonchsizlik kabi psixologik omillar sabab bo‘ladi. Mazkur tadqiqot sun’iy intellekt asosidagi chatbotlarning oliy ta’lim muassasalari talabalarining og‘zaki nutqiga ta’sirini o‘rganadi. Tadqiqotda aralash metod qo‘llanilib, talabalar to‘rt hafta davomida chatbot yordamida tuzilgan og‘zaki mashqlarda qatnashdilar. Ma’lumotlar oldi va yakuniy testlar, kuzatuvlar hamda so‘rovnomalar orqali yig‘ildi. Natijalar chatbotlardan foydalanish nutq ravonligini oshirish, so‘z boyligini kengaytirish va o‘ziga ishonchni kuchaytirishga xizmat qilishini ko‘rsatdi, shuningdek, gapirishdagi hayajon darajasi kamayganligi aniqlandi. Tadqiqot natijalari chatbotlarni oliy ta’limda samarali qo‘shimcha vosita sifatida qo‘llash mumkinligini tasdiqlaydi nsnsnsn nb nbnbnbnbbnbnbbnbnbbbbnbbb

**Kalit so‘zlar:** sun’iy intellekt, chatbotlar, gapirish ko‘nikmasi, kommunikativ kompetensiya, motivatsiya

## Introduction

With speed, AI now shapes how modern classrooms function. Knowledge building shifts - not just access or use. In language teaching especially, conversation skills matter most. Still missing too often though. Barriers pile up: systems resist change, minds struggle to adapt, emotions interfere. These hurdles define many EFL settings today. Chatbots powered by artificial intelligence now serve as tools in education, shaping how students interact. Because they adapt to user input, these systems support language development dynamically. Interaction unfolds naturally when responses mirror real conversation. One way they help is by guiding learners through tailored exchanges. Their presence shifts participation toward individual

needs quietly. Responsive dialogue becomes possible since feedback adjusts moment by moment. Through simulation of everyday speech, engagement gains momentum without force.

This shift tackles a long-standing issue in learning languages - few chances to speak meaningfully outside native environments. Rare exposure to authentic conversations leaves learners unpracticed in natural interaction. Fluency falters, even when rules and words are well understood. Spontaneity stays out of reach. Pragmatic skills grow slowly, blocked by lack of lived experience. What people know versus how they perform often does not match up - this gap appears again and again in studies on second language learning, mainly due to limited chances to speak and too little real conversation. According to H. Douglas Brown, picking up a language happens most naturally when learners engage in genuine exchanges, not through isolated grammar drills stripped of context [1]. In much the same way, Dell Hymes argues that being able to communicate well involves more than correct sentences; it includes understanding social rules, managing conversations, and using strategies when communication breaks down [2]. Still, older teaching methods tend to favor correct answers more than smooth expression, cutting down chances for real-time conversation because of school-related barriers - overcrowded classrooms, fixed syllabi, or testing-heavy instruction. Such setups commonly lead learners to engage less actively, speaking far less during lessons. What complicates things even more are emotions tied to how people pick up new languages. According to Horwitz and colleagues, feeling anxious about speaking a foreign tongue tends to reduce a learner's readiness to engage, dragging down results in measurable ways [8]. In similar fashion, Krashen proposed that feelings like nervousness, drive, or belief in oneself act as gates - either opening or closing access to incoming language data [5]. When these inner barriers rise, absorbing new material becomes harder than it needs to be.

One way to help learners feel more at ease is by shaping classrooms where support comes naturally. Digital tools now play a big part in how people practice languages, opening doors to listening, speaking, and connecting beyond fixed times or places. What stands out is how these setups allow real conversations to happen, responses to arrive fast, and lessons to fit personal needs - Chapelle points this out clearly [9]. On top of that, Warschauer notes they give students room to take charge, stay involved [10].

Starting fresh from established ideas, artificial intelligence adds depth through systems that adjust in real time - shaping responses based on how learners interact. According to Rose Luckin, its role lies not in replacing thought but in deepening it within classrooms [3]. Here, AI chatbots stand out as a fresh approach - one that links natural language processing with machine learning through dialogue-based systems to mirror how people talk. Seen through Merrill Swain's Output Hypothesis, using language actively drives learners into more thoughtful mental engagement and stronger grasp of grammar [7]. Chatbots help learners engage more deeply, according to real-world research. Interaction rises when students talk with automated systems, found Fryer and Carpenter [11]. Fluency gains appear alongside stronger self-assurance, Huang et al. observed [12]. Less stress during practice sessions shows up in Kim's work [13]. Success often ties back to drive, something Zoltán Dörnyei underlines clearly [6]. Twenty-four undergraduates took part in speaking tasks with chatbots across four weeks, shaping the core of this investigation. A blend of methods tracked their progress through early and late assessments, field notes, plus survey responses rooted in communication ability benchmarks [4]. Activities ranged from introducing oneself to discussing habits, sharing viewpoints, then engaging in back-and-forth dialogue. The setup allowed patterns to emerge without forcing conclusions ahead of time.

**Results**

The data showed clear gains in how students speak after using AI chatbots, especially when comparing results before and after the teaching method changed. Fluency stood out more than any other skill during this time. Improvement in speaking speed and smoothness became noticeable across most participants. What mattered most was not just accuracy but how naturally they could hold conversations. These shifts suggest the tool helped shape real communication growth. Speech grew faster as learners paused less, used fewer fillers, yet made adjustments on the fly with growing ease. Flow emerged naturally, not forced, showing that words linked together without constant mental searching. Practice happened repeatedly through conversations with artificial interlocutors, which built up quick access to vocabulary and grammar structures over time. Meaning came before rules each session, aligning closely with Brown's stance: real exchange shapes fluency more than drills ever could [1]. Beyond just speaking smoothly, word choice grew noticeably richer over time. Instead of repeating familiar terms, students began reaching for different ways to express themselves, drawing from a broader set of words. Exposure to chatbots seemed to help here - learners encountered meaningful examples during exchanges, then tried out similar phrasing right away. With practice, simpler phrases gave way to more exact and sophisticated wording. Earlier research supports this pattern, showing how technology-driven dialogue strengthens memory and use of new vocabulary through frequent, context-based encounters [12]. Still, grammar got somewhat stronger - even if gains trailed behind those in speaking ease and word range. Sentence patterns grew more precise, with simpler mistakes appearing less often during conversation practice. Over time, these small shifts hint that regular exchanges with bots do more than boost flow; they quietly support rule learning too, simply by offering repeated examples and corrections.

A key advancement emerged in how learners handled conversation. Not only did they engage more fully, but their timing in exchanges grew sharper, showing

growth in reacting and keeping discussions going. Starting talks came easier; so did continuing them without strain. Follow-ups appeared more naturally, answers matched context better, while rhythm in speech held steady across turns. This shift underscores what interaction does for language skill - something Dell Hymes long pointed to when stressing real-world speaking demands beyond grammar alone [2]. Findings from interviews backed up the numerical data. When researchers watched classes, they noticed students took part more often. Those hesitant to talk at first started contributing over time, joining discussions without being pushed - especially when working with chatbots or classmates. The change points toward a classroom atmosphere that felt safer and more inviting once chatbot tools were introduced.

Responses from learners, gathered via organized surveys, added depth to understanding how they experienced instruction. While completing assigned questions, most noted that interactions with the chatbot felt engaging, approachable, often reducing anxiety more than standard oral drills. Practice outside rigid schedules stood out - learners valued moving slowly when needed, returning to material freely. Without pressure tied to peer views, repeated attempts became possible, easing tension around making mistakes. Comfort during conversations improved noticeably among participants who practiced with chatbots. Without pressure from peers, learners expressed fewer worries about errors while speaking. Their confidence grew through repeated interactions free of social scrutiny. Such results support ideas proposed by Stephen Krashen regarding emotional barriers in learning. When stress drops, comprehension tends to rise because mental space opens up. His Affective Filter Hypothesis offers a framework for understanding this pattern [5]. A noticeable rise in motivation emerged as the intervention progressed. Speaking tasks began drawing more attention, while learners showed stronger commitment and involvement. Outside class hours, several took part in extra practice sessions - a sign that chatbot use carried learning into informal settings. The boost in drive appears tied to how AI chatbots respond dynamically, adjust to user

needs, yet feel individually shaped - features fitting well with ideas on motivation outlined by Zoltán Dörnyei [6].

Linguistic gains stand out when AI chatbots enter the picture - fluency grows, word knowledge widens, grammar strengthens. Interaction unfolds without heavy pressure, creating space for regular speaking attempts. Confidence rises alongside motivation, shaped by consistent engagement rather than high-stakes tests. Behind these shifts lies a steady companion: automated dialogue that responds anytime. Emotional comfort matters here, quietly boosting willingness to try. Practice happens more often because access stays constant. Progress ties closely to repeated use, not just exposure. What emerges is broader than skill - it includes attitude, persistence, even identity over time.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, data from this research show that using AI chatbots in teaching spoken English works well across multiple learning dimensions. These tools help students think through language tasks more effectively, while at the same time easing emotional barriers tied to speaking practice. Evidence indicates gains in how smoothly learners speak, their word choices, and conversational skills - improvements seen alongside slow but steady progress in correct grammar usage. What stands out is how consistent engagement with chatbots supports broader communication abilities without neglecting structural precision. What stands out in this research is how artificial intelligence tools help connect abstract language rules with actual speaking skills. Even when students understand grammar and words, putting them into fluent conversation remains hard for many learning English. Yet by offering repeated exchanges that adjust to user input, these automated systems support genuine attempts at expression, helping move learned material from memory into live usage. Such results align closely with ideas from scholars like H. Douglas

Brown and Dell Hymes, both of whom stress engagement through purposeful dialogue during language development [1][2]. Just as crucial is how this research sheds light on emotional aspects shaping language development. During the program, participants showed notably less hesitation when speaking, while their self-assurance grew - signs that chatbots can ease mental blocks around conversation. Because artificial intelligence offers a space free from criticism, adaptable pacing, and steady encouragement, students feel safer trying out new expressions. Such settings appear to support deeper engagement with the target language. Results here closely match Stephen Krashen's idea that lower stress opens pathways for better comprehension and retention [5]. What stands out is how motivation shapes success in picking up a new language. Instead of just raising involvement in class tasks, chatbot use led students to practice more on their own time. Because these AI systems respond instantly and adjust to user input, attention tends to stay high across sessions. This lines up well with ideas about drive and effort laid out by researcher Zoltán Dörnyei [6]. Seen one way, digital chat spaces powered by artificial intelligence help strengthen inner desire along with outside incentives. Looking at how teaching works, results show AI chatbots fit best when used alongside teachers instead of taking their place. Because they offer instant practice outside school hours, these tools help build blended setups where personal guidance meets digital support. Learning settings like this gain extra importance in English foreign language situations, especially when real conversation chances stay scarce. Still, some drawbacks in the study deserve attention. With few participants and a brief timeline, results might not apply widely. Longer projects using bigger, varied groups could offer clearer insights down the road. Exploring distinct AI tools and their effects on skills like speaking accuracy or social language use remains necessary. What learners bring personally - skill level, thinking patterns, comfort with tech - also shapes outcomes, something worth closer look. One key finding stands clear: AI chatbots are reshaping how languages are taught today. Their ability

to offer flexible, responsive practice helps learners speak with greater confidence. Instead of relying solely on classroom settings, students interact at their own pace through tailored feedback loops. Over time, these exchanges chip away at anxiety tied to using a new language. Engagement often deepens because the format feels less rigid than traditional methods. Technology shifts faster than teaching norms adapt. Yet schools now face pressure to keep step with digital change. Chatbot use fits within broader moves toward individualized instruction. They do not replace teachers but shift how support unfolds outside class hours. Looking ahead, such tools may become standard in EFL environments - not as novelties, but routine aids. Personalization, access, and active participation gain ground when machines respond in real time. Learning grows richer where hesitation fades and trial happens freely.

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