

ChatGPT-Assisted Interactive Speaking Practice: EFL Students' Perceptions

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Abstract

The use of generative Artificial Intelligence has increasingly influenced English Language Teaching, particularly in supporting speaking practice. One widely used AI tool is ChatGPT, which offers flexible opportunities for language learning. However, studies on students' perceptions of its use in speaking activities at the senior high school level remain limited. This study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for speaking practice. This study employed a descriptive qualitative design. Data were collected through a questionnaire and supported by semi-structured interviews with selected students, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings show that students perceive ChatGPT as a useful tool that provides additional opportunities for practice, increases confidence, and supports independent learning. However, several challenges were also identified, including over-reliance on the tool, uncertainty about the accuracy of responses, and the lack of real human interaction. Students also emphasized the importance of teacher guidance in using ChatGPT effectively and responsibly. These findings suggest that students' perceptions should be considered in integrating AI tools into language learning, and that guided use of ChatGPT can support more meaningful speaking instruction.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence; ChatGPT; interactive speaking; students' perceptions*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly influenced various aspects of education, including English Language Teaching (ELT). Advances in large language models have enabled AI-based applications to generate human-like language, maintain contextual interaction, and respond flexibly to users' input, making them increasingly relevant for educational purposes (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; Zhu et al., 2023). Recent studies also highlight the growing integration of generative AI tools in language learning environments due to their accessibility and interactive capabilities (Benek, 2025; UNESCO, 2023). In ELT, these developments are particularly important because language learning relies on interaction, practice, and exposure to meaningful communication (Godwin-Jones, 2022). Consequently, researchers have begun to explore how generative AI tools can support language learning, especially in skills that require active language use.

Among the four language skills, speaking is widely regarded as the most challenging for learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Speaking requires learners to simultaneously manage linguistic accuracy, fluency, pronunciation, and meaning while also dealing with affective factors such as anxiety and self-confidence (Chong & Reinders, 2020; Nation & Newton, 2020). Numerous studies have reported that EFL learners often experience fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and speaking anxiety, which limit their willingness to

communicate and participate in classroom speaking activities (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Zhu et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024). These difficulties are particularly evident in contexts where learners have limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom.

In senior high school EFL settings, speaking practice is often constrained by classroom conditions. Large class sizes, limited instructional time, and exam-oriented curricula reduce opportunities for students to engage in interactive speaking activities (Mulyono & Saskia, 2021; Irmayani & Isnawati, 2023). As a result, many students have limited chances to practice spontaneous oral communication, even though such practice is essential for developing communicative competence (Kotkavuori, 2024). These challenges highlight the need for alternative tools that can provide additional opportunities for speaking practice beyond the classroom.

Recent studies have examined the potential of ChatGPT and other generative AI tools in language learning. Research suggests that ChatGPT can support learning by providing instant responses, flexible access, and opportunities for independent practice, which may enhance learners' motivation and engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2022; Rintaningrum, 2023). These features indicate that ChatGPT can function as a supportive tool in English Language Teaching. In addition to its functional benefits, several studies report that students perceive ChatGPT as helpful for reducing learning anxiety and supporting language production, particularly in writing and general language practice (Yusuf et al., 2024; Hapsari, 2024). Previous studies also indicate that EFL learners tend to show positive perceptions toward the integration of digital learning tools in language learning contexts (Hapsari, 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024).

However, despite the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning, several limitations remain. Many studies focus on writing, grammar correction, or general language outcomes, while research on speaking skills is still limited (Godwin-Jones, 2022; Zhu et al., 2023). In addition, most studies are conducted in higher education contexts, leaving senior high school students underrepresented (Benek, 2025). Furthermore, existing research often emphasizes technological effectiveness rather than learners' perceptions and experiences, even though students' perceptions play an important role in shaping learning behavior and engagement (Zhou & Li, 2020; Ramalingam et al., 2022).

Another important issue is the ethical and pedagogical challenge associated with the use of generative AI in education. Scholars have raised concerns about students' over-reliance on AI-generated responses, the accuracy of AI outputs, and their potential impact on learners' autonomy and critical thinking (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). In addition, researchers emphasize the importance of responsible and guided AI integration in language learning environments (Benek, 2025). These concerns highlight the importance of understanding how students perceive and use ChatGPT before integrating it into speaking practice.

Based on these issues, a research gap can be identified. There is limited research exploring students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for speaking practice, particularly at the senior high school level. Previous studies have not sufficiently examined how students perceive the opportunities and challenges of using ChatGPT, nor have they explored practical solutions from learners' perspectives. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating senior high school students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for interactive English speaking practice, with particular attention to perceived opportunities, challenges, and practical solutions for its effective and responsible use. Therefore, this study aims to explore EFL students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for speaking practice, focusing on opportunities, challenges, and practical solutions. The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

- (1) What opportunities do students perceive from using ChatGPT for speaking practice?
- (2) What challenges do students perceive when using ChatGPT?
- (3) What practical solutions do students suggest to support the effective and responsible use of ChatGPT?

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on senior high school students and its emphasis on speaking practice, as well as its exploration of students' perceptions across opportunities,

challenges, and practical solutions. Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing discussion of AI-assisted language learning by providing insight into how EFL learners perceive the use of generative AI for speaking practice. Practically, the findings are expected to provide guidance for teachers in integrating ChatGPT more effectively and responsibly into English speaking activities.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for English speaking practice. This approach is appropriate for understanding participants' experiences and viewpoints in depth rather than measuring relationships statistically (Hurst, 2022). It was considered suitable for examining students' perceptions of the opportunities, challenges, and practical solutions related to ChatGPT use. These perception indicators were developed based on previous studies discussing generative AI in education, AI-assisted language learning, and students' experiences with AI-based learning tools (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; UNESCO, 2023; Benek, 2025).

The participants of this study were 50 Grade XI students from two different schools, namely SMK Al-Khoiriyah Baron and MAN 2 Lamongan, who had experience using ChatGPT for English learning activities. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure that participants met specific criteria, particularly prior use of ChatGPT for English learning and engagement in speaking practice activities. Participants were identified through a screening question in the questionnaire asking whether they had ever used ChatGPT for learning English, especially for speaking practice. Students who had never used ChatGPT for English speaking practice were not required to continue completing the questionnaire. This technique is commonly used in qualitative research to obtain information-rich data from participants relevant to the phenomenon being studied (Busetto et al., 2020). Grade XI students were selected because they are expected to have sufficient exposure to English instruction and communicative speaking activities.

Data were collected through a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. The questionnaire was designed to capture students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for speaking practice. It consisted of 16 close-ended items and 3 open-ended questions. The close-ended items were used to identify general response patterns, while the open-ended questions explore students' experiences and opinions in more detail. The items were developed based on previous studies on AI-assisted language learning and students' perceptions in EFL contexts (Zhu et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024; Godwin-Jones, 2022). The questionnaire was distributed online to ensure accessibility and encourage honest responses.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four selected students. Participants were chosen based on the clarity and relevance of their questionnaire responses. The interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into students' experiences, perceived benefits and challenges, and their suggestions for effective use of ChatGPT. This approach allowed the researcher to further explore key findings from the questionnaire.

The data were analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. Questionnaire responses were first organized based on the research questions, namely perceived opportunities, challenges, and practical solutions. Open-ended responses and interview transcripts were then coded to identify recurring patterns and key themes. This thematic analysis enabled systematic interpretation while preserving the richness of participants' perspectives (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed about the purpose of the study prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured by using codes instead of real names, and all data were used solely for academic purposes (Hurst, 2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Students' Perceived Opportunities

The questionnaire results showed that most students perceived ChatGPT as a useful tool for supporting English speaking practice. A total of 42 out of 50 students (84%) agreed that ChatGPT provided additional opportunities to practice speaking beyond the classroom environment. Students reported that they could engage in English conversations more frequently, especially outside school hours, which helped them maintain regular speaking practice. In addition, 39 students (78%) agreed that practicing with ChatGPT helped reduce their speaking anxiety. Many students felt more comfortable practicing with AI because they did not feel judged when making mistakes. Furthermore, 37 students (74%) stated that ChatGPT increased their confidence in speaking English. Another dominant finding showed that 44 students (88%) agreed that ChatGPT helped them generate ideas and expand vocabulary, making it easier to organize thoughts during speaking activities.

Several students also mentioned in the open-ended questionnaire responses that ChatGPT helped them practice speaking more confidently and provided useful vocabulary for conversations. Some students explained that they could repeat conversations several times without feeling embarrassed, which encouraged them to practice more actively.

Interview data also supported these findings. One student stated:

"When I practice speaking with ChatGPT, I am not afraid of making mistakes. I can try again and again without feeling embarrassed." (Student 1)

Another student explained that ChatGPT helped provide vocabulary and sentence examples when practicing speaking tasks.

These findings suggest that ChatGPT can create a low-pressure learning environment that supports speaking practice and reduces anxiety. The opportunity to practice without fear of negative judgment appears to encourage students to participate more actively and confidently in English speaking activities. This finding is consistent with previous studies which reported that AI-assisted learning tools may increase learner confidence and reduce anxiety in language learning contexts (Zhu et al., 2023; Yusuf et al., 2024).

In addition, the findings suggest that ChatGPT supports language production by helping students generate ideas and vocabulary during speaking practice. This result aligns with previous research highlighting the role of generative AI in facilitating language learning and learner engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2022; Benek, 2025). From the perspective of interactive speaking theory, frequent opportunities for meaningful communication are important for developing speaking competence (Chong & Reinders, 2020; Nation & Newton, 2020). Therefore, ChatGPT can function as a complementary tool that supports speaking activities beyond the classroom setting.

2. Students' Perceived Challenges

Despite the positive perceptions, the findings also revealed several challenges experienced by students when using ChatGPT for speaking practice. The questionnaire results showed that 31 students (62%) agreed that they sometimes became too dependent on ChatGPT when preparing speaking responses. Some students admitted that excessive reliance on AI reduced their effort to think independently. In addition, 34 students (68%) expressed doubts about the accuracy and appropriateness of ChatGPT's responses, particularly regarding whether the generated language reflected natural English used in real-life communication. Another important finding showed that 41

students (82%) agreed that ChatGPT could not replace real human interaction in speaking practice. Students explained that although ChatGPT supported conversation practice, it lacked emotional response, spontaneous interaction, and pronunciation feedback found in authentic communication.

Several students also expressed in the open-ended questionnaire responses that they sometimes relied too much on ChatGPT when practicing speaking and were uncertain whether the language produced sounded natural for real conversations. Some students further noted that practicing with ChatGPT felt different from speaking with real people because it lacked spontaneous interaction.

This issue was also reflected in the interview findings. One student stated:

"Sometimes I just follow what ChatGPT says instead of thinking by myself. If I use it too often, I feel less confident to speak without it." (Student 2)

Another student explained that ChatGPT sometimes provided responses that sounded unnatural or too formal for daily communication.

These findings suggest that over-reliance on ChatGPT may reduce learners' independence, critical thinking, and confidence in producing their own ideas during speaking practice (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; Sukyadi et al., 2026). Similar concerns have been highlighted in previous studies discussing the risks of excessive dependence on AI tools in education (Rahman & Watanobe, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). The findings also indicate that students are aware that AI-generated language may not always be contextually accurate or appropriate for authentic communication.

Furthermore, students' perceptions regarding the limitations of ChatGPT in replacing real human interaction support interactionist perspectives in second language learning. Meaningful interaction, emotional engagement, and negotiation of meaning remain essential elements in speaking development (Kotkavuori, 2024). Therefore, although ChatGPT provides valuable support for speaking practice, it should be positioned as a supplementary tool rather than a substitute for authentic classroom interaction.

3. Students' Suggested Practical Solutions

In response to the challenges identified, students proposed several practical solutions for the effective and responsible use of ChatGPT in speaking practice. The questionnaire results showed that 45 students (90%) agreed that teacher guidance was necessary when using ChatGPT for English learning activities. Students believed that clear instructions and boundaries would help them use the tool more responsibly and effectively. In addition, 43 students (86%) agreed that ChatGPT should function as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for classroom speaking activities. Another dominant finding revealed that 46 students (92%) emphasized the importance of clear rules and responsible AI use during learning activities.

Several students also suggested in the open-ended questionnaire responses that teachers should provide guidance and clear rules to help students use ChatGPT responsibly during speaking practice. Some students believed that combining ChatGPT with classroom discussion and peer interaction would create a more balanced learning experience.

Interview data further supported these findings. One student stated:

"I think teachers should explain how to use ChatGPT properly. If there are rules, students will not use it carelessly." (Student 3)

Students also suggested using ChatGPT for specific purposes, such as practicing dialogues, brainstorming ideas, rehearsing speaking tasks, and expanding vocabulary, rather than using it to complete speaking assignments entirely.

These findings indicate that students are aware of the importance of responsible AI use in language learning. Rather than rejecting ChatGPT, students expect balanced integration supported by teacher guidance and classroom interaction. This finding aligns with blended learning perspectives, which emphasize that technology should complement pedagogical interaction rather than replace it (Ramalingam et al., 2022).

In addition, students' recommendations reflect growing awareness of ethical considerations in AI-assisted learning. The findings support previous discussions emphasizing the importance of responsible AI integration, learner autonomy, and critical use of AI-generated content in educational settings (UNESCO, 2023; Vincent-Lancrin & van der Vlies, 2020). Therefore, effective implementation of ChatGPT in speaking practice requires not only technological access but also pedagogical guidance and ethical awareness.

CONCLUSION

This study explored EFL students' perceptions of using ChatGPT for English speaking practice. The result indicate that students perceive ChatGPT as a supportive supplementary tool that promotes speaking confidence, reduces anxiety, and facilitates independent learning opportunities beyond the classroom. However, the study also identified several challenges, including students' over-reliance on AI-generated responses, uncertainty regarding the contextual accuracy of ChatGPT outputs, and the absence of authentic human interaction. These results suggest that although ChatGPT offers valuable support for speaking practice, it cannot replace real communicative interaction, which remains essential for developing speaking competence.

The study further highlights the importance of pedagogically guided AI integration. Students emphasized the need for teacher guidance, clear boundaries, and responsible use of ChatGPT during learning activities. Therefore, ChatGPT should be positioned as a complementary learning tool that supports classroom speaking practice rather than replacing human interaction. This study contributes to the growing literature on AI-assisted language learning by providing insights into senior high school EFL learners' perceptions of ChatGPT for speaking practice, an area that remains underrepresented in current research.

Nevertheless, this study is limited by its relatively small participant pool and its reliance on self-reported perceptions, which may not fully reflect students' actual speaking development or classroom practices. Future studies are encouraged to investigate the effects of ChatGPT-assisted speaking practice on measurable speaking performance, interactional competence, and learner autonomy through experimental, mixed-method, or longitudinal research designs involving more diverse educational contexts.

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