

THE ROLE OF AI IN ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' SPEAKING SKILLS

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Abstract. *A persistent gap remains between digital speaking tools and the way they actually reshape oral performance in EFL classrooms. This paper examines how artificial intelligence supports speaking development through qualitative content analysis and comparative reading of classroom reports and pedagogical descriptions. The material was grouped into three recurring feedback modes: immediate pronunciation correction, guided dialogic prompting, and adaptive performance tracking. Across the reviewed cases, the strongest gains appeared in fluency stabilization, clearer segmental pronunciation, and reduced hesitation during short speaking tasks, while weak systems mainly simulated interaction without sustained learner uptake. The analysis also showed that feedback combining timing, specificity, and follow-up prompts produced four stable improvement effects: self-monitoring, reformulation, confidence growth, and longer turns. The study concludes that AI contributes most when it functions as an interactive scaffold rather than a replacement for human-mediated speaking practice.*

Keywords: *adaptive tutoring systems, automated oral feedback, dialogic practice, oral fluency, pronunciation accuracy, qualitative content analysis*

Аннотация. *Сохраняется разрыв между цифровыми средствами развития устной речи и тем, как они действительно меняют речевое поведение в аудитории EFL. В статье рассмотрено, как искусственный интеллект поддерживает формирование говорения на основе качественного контент-анализа и сравнительного чтения описаний занятий и педагогических отчетов. Материал был сгруппирован в три повторяющихся режима обратной связи: немедленная коррекция произношения, направляющие диалогические подсказки и адаптивное отслеживание результатов. Во всех рассмотренных случаях наиболее заметный эффект проявлялся в стабилизации беглости, более четкой сегментной артикуляции и сокращении пауз в коротких устных заданиях, тогда как слабые системы лишь имитировали взаимодействие без устойчивого усвоения. Сочетание точного времени, конкретности и последующих стимулов дало четыре устойчивых эффекта: самоконтроль, переформулирование, рост уверенности и увеличение длины реплик. Показано, что ИИ наиболее продуктивен как интерактивная опора, а не замена живой речевой практики.*

Ключевые слова: адаптивные обучающие системы, автоматизированная устная обратная связь, диалогическая практика, беглость устной речи, качество произношения, качественный контент-анализ

INTRODUCTION

AI-driven speaking practice has become a pressing issue because EFL learners still encounter limited interaction, uneven pronunciation control, and low fluency in classroom speech. Godwin-Jones [1] links emerging AI tools with language learning environments, while Kohnke, Moorhouse, and Zou [2] show that ChatGPT can extend oral practice beyond teacher-led drills. This study examines the process of AI-supported speaking development; the focus is on fluency and pronunciation, which remain the most sensitive indicators of speaking skills.

The scientific novelty lies in a comparative reading of recent pedagogical sources from 2019–2025, where AI feedback is treated as an interactional mediator rather than a technical add-on. Wang, Liu, Tu, et al. [3] synthesize evidence that AI-assisted language learning improves speaking performance, and Li and Hwang [4] specify how feedback logs reshape learner self-monitoring. The present analysis therefore asks how AI changes speaking practice for EFL learners and which outcomes are most consistently strengthened.

The aim of the study is to determine how AI enhances EFL learners' speaking skills through fluency and pronunciation development. Four tasks are set: to identify the main AI-supported speaking tools, to compare their feedback functions, to examine fluency-related changes, and to trace pronunciation-oriented gains. Ethnographic research is combined with source study and hermeneutic reading of classroom reports, which prepares the methodological basis for the next section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The comparative corpus assembled through qualitative content analysis shows that AI-supported speaking practice is most visible where interaction is immediate, repetitive, and feedback-rich [5]. Karimov, A. linked this pattern to didactic flexibility in English teaching, especially when learners need short speaking turns rather than extended lectures [6]. Islomova, N. described interactive platforms as effective because they convert passive exposure into guided oral production. These findings align with the corpus reading: AI does not replace classroom speech, but it reorganizes speaking opportunities around micro-practice and response density.

Fluency emerged as the most stable indicator across the recent studies [3]. Wang, Y., Liu, C., Tu, Y. et al. synthesized speaking-performance studies and found that AI-assisted practice repeatedly supported smoother turn-taking and reduced hesitation [4]. Li, J. and Hwang, G.-J. showed that AI-based feedback sharpened learners' pacing by making pauses and repetitions visible during task completion. Such evidence suggests

that fluency gains are tied less to isolated drills than to repeated correction cycles, where the learner hears, revises, and speaks again within one task sequence.

Pronunciation improvement was recorded with a different profile [7]. Muminova, D. emphasized that AI tools are especially useful for segmental correction, because learners can rehearse sounds without the social pressure of a live audience [8]. Sattarova, Z. observed that chatbot and virtual-assistant environments encourage repeated articulation, which helps learners notice stress and intonation patterns. The corpus therefore indicates that pronunciation benefits are strongest when AI supplies low-risk repetition and immediate acoustic comparison, a mechanism that is less available in ordinary pair work.

Accuracy and confidence formed the fourth analytic pair, and they were more uneven than fluency and pronunciation [2]. Kohnke, Moorhouse, and Zou argued that ChatGPT-based tasks can expand lexical range, yet they also warned that accuracy depends on prompt design and teacher mediation [9]. Kasneci, Sessler, Küchemann et al. similarly noted that large language models may stimulate participation while still requiring critical supervision for reliable output. Confidence rose when learners received nonjudgmental feedback, but it remained fragile whenever AI responses were too generic or when task goals were unclear.

The evidence base therefore confirms the hypothesis only partially and with a clear hierarchy of outcomes [10]. Chen, Chen, and Lin placed AI in education within a broader adaptive-learning logic, which explains why speaking gains appear when feedback is individualized rather than merely automated [1]. Godwin-Jones, R. likewise treated AI as a language-learning accelerator whose value depends on pedagogical orchestration, not technical novelty alone. On that basis, the next analytical step is to distinguish which feedback formats sustain oral development and which interaction patterns merely simulate speaking without deep learner uptake.

CONCLUSION

AI-supported speaking practice has clarified a distinct pedagogical pattern for EFL learners: fluency and pronunciation improve when interaction is immediate, adaptive, and repeated. The study therefore establishes AI as a functional mediator of oral rehearsal rather than a substitute for teacher-led speech work. This synthesis is new for the present comparative reading because it joins speaking skills, feedback, and learner confidence into one philological argument. At the same time, the evidence also shows a limit: AI performs best when it is embedded in guided classroom interpretation, not left as isolated automation. Future inquiry should examine how AI feedback shapes pragmatic accuracy in extended monologic and dialogic tasks across different EFL proficiency levels.

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