

THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN DEVELOPING THE ORAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF PROSPECTIVE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Abstract

The rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities for improving foreign language education, particularly in the development of learners' oral communication skills. For prospective English language teachers, effective speaking competence is essential because their future professional activities require not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency, interactional competence, pronunciation, and the ability to communicate ideas clearly. This thesis examines the methodological potential of AI platforms in developing the oral communication skills of prospective English language teachers. Particular attention is given to AI-supported speaking practice, automated feedback, pronunciation development, vocabulary enrichment, fluency practice, and reflective learning. The proposed methodology is based on a human-centred approach in which AI functions as a supplementary pedagogical resource rather than a replacement for teachers or authentic human communication. The methodological sequence consists of independent speaking, AI-supported practice, AI-generated feedback, critical evaluation, re-performance, reflection, and independent speaking. The approach may provide learners with additional opportunities for repeated oral practice and individualized feedback while simultaneously developing learner autonomy and AI literacy. However, effective implementation requires teacher mediation, critical evaluation of AI-generated feedback, and integration with authentic communicative activities.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, generative AI, oral communication, speaking skills, prospective English teachers, AI-assisted language learning, pronunciation, fluency, teacher education, learner autonomy.

Introduction

Oral communication competence is a fundamental component of foreign language proficiency and an essential professional skill for prospective English language teachers. Future teachers are expected to communicate accurately and fluently, participate in discussions, express ideas coherently, pronounce words appropriately, and interact effectively with learners and colleagues. Therefore, the development of speaking competence should occupy an important position in English language teacher education.

Recent developments in artificial intelligence have expanded the possibilities for language learning beyond traditional classroom interaction. AI-powered platforms and conversational systems can provide learners with opportunities to practise language repeatedly, simulate communicative situations, receive immediate feedback, and work with language materials adapted to their individual needs. Research on AI-supported English language learning indicates growing interest in the use of conversational AI, automated speech evaluation, and generative AI for developing speaking competence (Du & Daniel, 2024; Zou et al., 2023).

For prospective English language teachers, however, the pedagogical value of AI should not be understood simply as the availability of a technological tool. The effectiveness of AI depends on how it is incorporated into the learning process. Learners need to communicate independently, critically evaluate AI-generated feedback, identify errors, revise their performance, and subsequently demonstrate their competence without technological assistance. Thus, the central principle of the proposed methodology is:

AI-assisted speaking practice should lead to independent human communication competence.

Methodological Approach

The proposed methodology integrates AI-supported speaking activities into a structured learning cycle.

Independent Speaking

The learning process begins with an independent speaking task. Students may be asked to speak about an academic topic, describe a situation, express an opinion, give a short presentation, or participate in a simulated professional interaction.

At this stage, students perform without AI assistance. This makes it possible to observe their existing level of fluency, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and ability to organize ideas.

AI-Supported Speaking Practice

After the initial performance, students use an AI platform to practise the same or a similar communicative task. AI-based conversational systems can simulate different communication contexts, allowing students to practise asking and answering questions, expressing opinions, explaining concepts, and maintaining a conversation.

For prospective English teachers, such activities can include:

- classroom management dialogues;
- teacher–student conversations;
- academic discussions;
- professional interviews;
- presentations;
- debates;
- question-and-answer sessions.

This repeated practice can create additional opportunities for oral language production beyond the limited speaking time available during conventional classroom activities.

AI-Generated Feedback

AI platforms may provide feedback related to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and other aspects of oral production. Research has examined the potential of automatic feedback systems for supporting EFL speaking development (Zou et al., 2023), while systematic research has also highlighted the

growing role of AI-powered chatbots in EFL speaking practice (Du & Daniel, 2024).

However, AI feedback should not automatically be treated as correct. AI systems may misunderstand pronunciation, communicative context, or the intended meaning of an utterance. Therefore, teacher guidance and learner judgement remain essential.

Critical Evaluation of Feedback

Students should be taught to critically evaluate AI-generated feedback rather than accept every recommendation without analysis. They can compare AI suggestions with dictionaries, grammar references, course materials, teacher feedback, and their own communicative intentions.

This stage is particularly important for prospective English teachers because they will eventually need to evaluate language performance not only as learners but also as future educators.

Re-performance

After analysing the feedback, students repeat the speaking task. They attempt to correct relevant pronunciation, grammatical, lexical, or fluency problems identified during the previous stages.

The comparison between the initial and revised performance can help learners recognize their progress and identify aspects that still require development.

Reflection

Reflection constitutes an important component of the methodology. Students evaluate their own performance and consider questions such as:

- Which speaking difficulties did I identify?
- Which AI suggestions were useful?
- Which suggestions were inaccurate or inappropriate?
- What vocabulary or grammatical structures did I learn?
- What should I improve in my next speaking task?

Such reflection contributes to learner autonomy and develops the ability to use AI critically and responsibly.

Independent Speaking Performance

The final stage requires students to perform independently without relying on AI during the actual communicative task. This stage is necessary because the ultimate objective is not dependence on technology but the development of autonomous oral communication competence.

The complete methodological cycle can therefore be represented as follows:

Independent Speaking → AI-Supported Practice → AI Feedback → Critical Evaluation → Re-performance → Reflection → Independent Speaking

Discussion

The integration of AI into speaking instruction offers several methodological opportunities for prospective English language teachers. First, AI platforms can increase the amount of available speaking practice. In a conventional classroom, each student may have limited opportunities to speak because of restricted lesson time and class size. AI-supported interaction can provide additional individual practice outside the classroom.

Second, AI can support repeated performance and immediate feedback. Instead of completing a speaking activity only once, learners can repeat the task, analyse their performance, and attempt to improve it. Such iterative practice is particularly relevant to fluency and pronunciation development.

Third, AI-supported speaking activities can contribute to learner autonomy. Students can independently select topics, practise conversations, identify difficulties, and monitor their progress. However, autonomy should not be confused with complete independence from teachers. Teacher mediation remains important for selecting appropriate tasks, evaluating AI feedback, and ensuring pedagogical relevance.

At the same time, several limitations should be considered. Excessive dependence on AI may reduce authentic interaction with human interlocutors. AI-generated feedback can also contain inaccurate or contextually inappropriate suggestions. Furthermore, successful communication involves social, pragmatic,

and interpersonal dimensions that cannot necessarily be reproduced fully through AI interaction.

Therefore, AI should be integrated with pair work, group discussion, presentations, debates, role plays, and other forms of authentic human communication. In teacher education, the objective should be to combine technological opportunities with pedagogical judgement and interpersonal communication.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence platforms have considerable methodological potential for supporting the development of oral communication skills among prospective English language teachers. AI can provide additional opportunities for speaking practice, conversational interaction, pronunciation development, feedback, repetition, and reflection.

Nevertheless, AI should function as a pedagogically mediated learning resource rather than a substitute for teachers or human communication. The proposed methodology places independent learner performance at both the beginning and the end of the learning cycle. AI is introduced between these stages to provide practice and feedback, while critical evaluation and teacher mediation ensure responsible use.

The methodological sequence—Independent Speaking → AI Practice → AI Feedback → Critical Evaluation → Re-performance → Reflection → Independent Speaking—can therefore serve as a practical framework for integrating AI into speaking instruction for prospective English language teachers.

The key pedagogical principle is that technology should support the development of human communication competence, not replace it.

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