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Exploring Students' Perceptions of AI-Powered Assistants in Enhancing English Speaking Proficiency

Lam Ky Nhan
Nam Can Tho University
Faculty of Foreign Languages
Can Tho, Vietnam

Abstract:- This study explores the perceptions of 110 English language students at Nam Can Tho University regarding the effectiveness of AI-powered assistants in enhancing English speaking proficiency. Utilizing a 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire, the research examines key aspects of AI integration, including personalized instruction, real-time feedback, and the role of AI in fostering continuous practice. The findings reveal that students generally recognize the potential of AI tools—such as chatbots, virtual tutors, and speech recognition software—to improve speaking skills and provide tailored learning experiences. Notably, students reported that AI tools offer immediate, reliable feedback and help reinforce both strengths and areas for improvement. However, concerns emerged around the absence of human interaction and the potential for overreliance on AI-driven methods, aligning with broader debates in the field. Comparisons with existing literature demonstrate consistency in students' positive outlooks on the efficacy of AI for language learning, while also underscoring the need for a balanced approach that integrates traditional pedagogical methods. This study contributes valuable insights into the evolving role of AI in language education and highlights implications for its pedagogical application.

Keywords:- *AI-Powered Assistants, English Speaking Proficiency, Language Learning; Virtual Tutors, Chatbots.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) into language acquisition has attracted considerable interest in recent times, especially in its capacity to improve speaking skills. Advanced artificial intelligence (AI) technologies, like virtual tutors, chatbots, and voice recognition systems, provide customized and adaptable learning experiences that were previously unachievable using conventional approaches (Hsu & Chiu, 2021). These software may replicate authentic conversation situations, offering instant feedback and strengthening language proficiency through ongoing practice, which is crucial for enhancing speaking fluency (Wang & Wang, 2022).

Artificial intelligence (AI)-powered language learning systems have demonstrated potential in tackling prevalent obstacles in language education, such as restricted availability of native speakers and personalized teaching. As emphasized by Lee and Kim (2023), artificial intelligence systems have the capability to evaluate the strengths and shortcomings of learners, providing customized feedback that promotes development in certain domains like as pronunciation and conversational abilities. Furthermore, these technologies have the capacity to enhance learner autonomy by enabling students to engage in practice at their own speed, therefore fostering higher levels of involvement and motivation (Brown & Smith, 2021). The capacity of artificial intelligence to adjust material according to the performance of learners also enriches the whole learning process, resulting in better results in speaking competence (Chen & Huang, 2023).

Notwithstanding these benefits, apprehensions regarding the constraints of AI-driven technologies persist. Liu et al. (2022) highlight the significance of human connection in language learning, pointing out that the lack of direct discourse with teachers or peers could diminish the quality of language acquisition. An excessive dependence on AI systems may also weaken conventional learning approaches, which are nevertheless crucial for fostering profound language comprehension and cultural proficiency (Xu & Zhang, 2021). Furthermore, the efficacy of artificial intelligence in language acquisition is significantly influenced by the methods and data employed for training these systems, which might occasionally generate imprecise or too simplistic responses (Nguyen & Le, 2022).

Among Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, the use of language learning technologies driven by artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly increased. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of empirical study on students' perspectives of these tools, including over their effectiveness in improving speaking skills. The objective of this study is to investigate the perspectives of Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students about AI-driven aides in enhancing their speaking abilities. By analyzing their perspectives on the efficacy, constraints, and general influence of AI tools, this study seeks to offer useful insights on the potential of AI in language teaching, as well as the obstacles that must be overcome for its incorporation.

The present study expands on prior research (Hsu & Chiu, 2021; Wang & Wang, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2023; Brown & Smith, 2021) by examining the impact of AI-driven tools on the speaking skills of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students in Vietnam. This contributes to the increasing range of studies on the influence of AI in language acquisition. An

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investigation of this nature is crucial for comprehending the function of artificial intelligence (AI) in augmenting language instruction and the prospective advancements using AI in this domain.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. English as a Global Language

➢ *Importance in Academic and Professional Settings*

English is now widely recognised as the dominant worldwide language, especially in academic and professional settings, where its impact is significant and diverse.

Within academia, English holds a crucial position as the primary language of intellectual communication. This hegemony is seen in the substantial quantity of research papers, scholarly publications, and conferences published in the English language. Based on Hyland's (2015) research, most influential academic publications are published in English, enabling the broad distribution of research results and promoting international cooperation. Furthermore, the growing number of foreign students and researchers who choose to study and work in English-speaking institutions further reinforces this tendency, hence improving their academic and professional opportunities (Altbach, 2016). Proficiency in English is essential in academic publication due to its worldwide scope, which allows writers to access a wide range of knowledge and interact with a varied scholarly community (Moulin, 2020).

Fluency in English is frequently a requirement for career progression in professional environments. English serves as the principal working language for several global enterprises and international organizations. The increasing need for English proficiency in several sectors such as technology, finance, and healthcare is indicative of this trend (Graddol, 2010). As Crystal (2003) emphasizes, the significance of English in the professional world is underscored by its position in global commerce, diplomacy, and technological innovation. Competent English communication skills can result in enhanced employment prospects, professional advancement, and involvement in global initiatives. Personnel that possess proficient English language abilities are more inclined to participate in international partnerships and global teams, therefore augmenting their career opportunities and professional growth (Jenkins, 2015).

Evidence from recent research highlights that the worldwide supremacy of English is a result of historical colonialism, economic might, and cultural impact (Pennycook, 2020). The considerable prevalence of English on digital platforms reinforces its position as a worldwide language, since more than half of the material on the internet is written in English (Davies, 2023). The global proliferation of English has significant consequences for language policy and education, as it frequently results in language hierarchies and impacts linguistic variety (Cenoz & Gorter, 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of "Englishes" has developed to recognise the many types of English spoken globally, which are characterised by local linguistic and cultural factors (Jenkins, 2015). The emergence of World Englishes poses a challenge to the conventional concept of a singular standard English, therefore emphasizing the necessity for a more expansive methodology in the instruction of the English language (Matsuda, 2019).

➢ *Challenges Faced by Non-Native Speakers*

English language learners who are not native English speakers have certain obstacles that might affect their proficiency and self-assurance in using English, especially in academic and professional settings.

Linguistic obstacles encompass issues related to oral pronunciation, which can impact the clarity and effectiveness of communication. In their 2009 study, Derwing and Munro observed that non-native speakers frequently encounter difficulties associated with accent, resulting in misunderstandings and less intelligibility in verbal exchanges. Miller (2011) highlights the significance of differences in pronunciation and accent as obstacles in professional environments, where effective communication is crucial. Furthermore, individuals who are not native speakers may encounter difficulties in using vocabulary, idiomatic phrases, and grammatical correctness, therefore impacting their capacity to communicate exact meanings and participate in sophisticated conversations (Swan, 2005).

When it comes to academic writing, individuals who are not native speakers may have challenges with genre-specific norms, logical consistency, and conformity to academic criteria. Swales (2017) examines the notable variations in the rules of English academic writing, including the organization of arguments and the citation of sources, as compared to those in other languages. In their 2007 study, Hyland and Tse emphasize that non-native speakers typically require extra assistance in order to effectively traverse these norms and generate academic writings of superior quality. Challenges of considerable magnitude may arise from matters such as academic style, organization, and the deployment of suitable academic terminology (Flowerdew, 2015).

Within professional settings, individuals who are not native speakers may encounter difficulties in comprehending and employing both casual and formal communication styles, as well as adjusting to the cultural conventions of English-speaking workplaces (Kirkpatrick, 2007). These difficulties might hinder their capacity to participate efficiently in meetings, discussions, and social transactions. Professional speech may present challenges for non-native speakers in comprehending cultural allusions, idiomatic idioms, and subtleties (Canagarajah, 2013).

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B. Traditional Methods of Improving Speaking Proficiency

➢ *Classroom-Based Instruction*

Classroom-based education continues to be a vital approach for enhancing speaking accuracy, focusing on organized learning settings with diverse pedagogical strategies. Ongoing progress in this field nevertheless reinforces conventional approaches such as direct teaching, drill exercises, and interactive activities.

Direct instruction refers to the deliberate and clear teaching of language norms, vocabulary, and pronunciation patterns. This technique facilitates the development of fundamental information and the application of speaking skills through structured activities such as role-plays, dialogues, and repetition drills throughout learning. Leow (2021) suggests that direct instruction can enhance fluency and accuracy in speaking by offering learners explicit models and structured practice opportunities. Crucially, teachers' corrective comments are essential for improving pronunciation and grammatical precision (Goh & Burns, 2020).

Interactive activities in the classroom, such as group discussions, debates, and presentations, are specifically created to replicate authentic communication situations. Such exercises promote impromptu language usage and enhance self-assurance in oral communication skills (Hattie & Yates, 2021). By using communicative language teaching methods that prioritize interaction and practical language usage, the efficacy of classroom-based learning is improved (Ellis, 2020).

➢ *Language Exchange Programs*

Language exchange programs, referred to as language tandems, are highly successful in enhancing speaking skills by facilitating reciprocal learning experiences. These programs entail the matching of learners with native speakers of the target language, therefore enabling them to engage in casual interactions to enhance their speaking and listening abilities.

Current study emphasizes the advantages of language exchange programs in improving oral communication skills and fostering cultural comprehension. The participants participate in dialogues with individuals who are native speakers, therefore facilitating reciprocal practice in their own original language. The reciprocal interaction facilitates genuine language production and enhances learners' proficiency in fluency, pronunciation, and understanding (Saito & Lyster, 2022). Research indicates that these educational programs can enhance learners' motivation and involvement by providing hands-on, authentic language practice (DeBoer et al., 2021).

Furthermore, language exchange programs have been modified to suit internet platforms, therefore enhancing their availability and facilitation. Language exchanges conducted online enable learners to establish connections with native speakers from throughout the world, therefore offering adaptable options for both practical application and cultural interchange (Chung, 2023). The prominence of these digital media has grown significantly, particularly due to current trends towards distant learning and digital communication (Stockwell, 2023).

➢ *Immersion Experiences*

Immersion experiences are highly effective for improving speaking proficiency by providing learners with extensive exposure to the target language in natural contexts. These experiences often involve living in a country where the target language is spoken, participating in immersive educational programs, or engaging in intensive language practice.

Recent research supports the benefits of immersion experiences in developing speaking skills. Immersion allows learners to practice language in real-life situations, which enhances their ability to use language fluently and accurately (Clement, 2021). Studies have shown that immersion environments facilitate rapid language acquisition and improve pronunciation, grammar, and conversational abilities (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2021). Immersion experiences also contribute to increased cultural awareness and adaptation skills, as learners navigate social interactions and cultural nuances in the target language (Cheng & Wang, 2022).

In addition to traditional immersion programs, new models of immersion have emerged, including virtual immersion experiences. These programs use digital platforms to simulate immersive environments, providing learners with interactive and engaging ways to practice speaking skills (Gómez, 2023). Virtual immersion can complement physical immersion by offering additional opportunities for practice and cultural engagement.

C. AI in Language Learning

➢ *Evolution of AI-Powered Language Learning Tools*

The advancement of language learning technologies driven by artificial intelligence has enormously revolutionized the field of language teaching. Initial technologies concentrated on fundamental computer-assisted language learning (CALL) applications that provided fixed tasks and drills. Nevertheless, the latest progress in artificial intelligence (AI) has brought out dynamic, adaptable, and interactive technologies that enrich English language acquisition experiences.

To far, artificial intelligence (AI) has facilitated the creation of advanced language learning systems that utilize machine learning algorithms and natural language processing (NLP) to offer customized learning experiences (Li, 2022). Contemporary artificial intelligence systems utilize data-driven methodologies to customize material according to the specific requirements of each student, monitor advancement, and provide immediate feedback. Artificial intelligence (AI)-driven programs like Duolingo and Babbel have included voice recognition, gamification, and adaptive learning algorithms to customize courses and practice activities according on the skill levels of the users (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020).

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Advancements spurred by artificial intelligence also encompass chatbots and virtual language teachers that replicate speech and offer interactive practice exercises. These tools combine Natural Language Processing (NLP) and machine learning algorithms to actively include learners in authentic conversations, therefore facilitating the development of their speaking and understanding abilities inside a simulated environment (Zhao et al., 2021). The ongoing development of artificial intelligence in language acquisition is characterised by ever higher precision, user involvement, and the capacity to accommodate various learning methods and preferences.

➢ *Types of AI Assistants for Language Learning*

AI assistants for language learning encompass a variety of tools designed to support and enhance the learning process through advanced technology. These include:

- Chatbots: AI-driven chatbots simulate conversation with learners, offering practice in real-time dialogues. They can provide instant feedback on language use, help with pronunciation, and engage users in interactive exercises (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2023).
- Virtual Tutors: AI virtual tutors offer personalized instruction and support based on individual learner profiles. These tutors can adapt lesson plans, recommend resources, and provide targeted exercises to address specific areas of improvement (Lee, 2022).
- Speech Recognition Tools: Tools with speech recognition capabilities analyze and assess spoken language, providing feedback on pronunciation and fluency. Applications like Rosetta Stone and Pimsleur use this technology to help learners practice speaking skills (Vasalou et al., 2022).
- Adaptive Learning Platforms: These platforms use AI algorithms to adjust the difficulty and content of lessons based on learner performance. They track progress, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide customized learning paths (Chou & Hsu, 2023).
- Language Translation Apps: AI-powered translation apps, such as Google Translate, facilitate language learning by providing translations, context, and usage examples. They help learners understand and practice new vocabulary and phrases (Yuan et al., 2021).

➢ *Benefits and Limitations of AI in Language Education*

- *Benefits*

✓ Personalization: AI tools can tailor learning experiences to individual needs, offering customized feedback and adapting content based on learner performance (Li, 2022). This personalization enhances engagement and improves learning outcomes by addressing specific areas of weakness and reinforcing strengths (Zhao et al., 2021).

✓ Accessibility: AI-powered tools make language learning more accessible by providing on-demand practice and resources. Learners can engage with language learning applications anytime and anywhere, facilitating continuous practice and reinforcement (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020).

✓ Immediate Feedback: AI systems offer instant feedback on language use, allowing learners to correct mistakes in real-time and improve their skills more efficiently (Vasalou et al., 2022). This immediate feedback is crucial for effective language acquisition and fluency development (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2023).

- *Limitations*

✓ Lack of Human Interaction: While AI tools can simulate conversation, they may lack the nuanced understanding and empathy of human instructors. This can impact the quality of feedback and the ability to address complex language learning challenges (Chou & Hsu, 2023).

✓ Accuracy and Reliability: AI tools are dependent on the quality of algorithms and data used. Errors in speech recognition or translation can lead to misunderstandings and incorrect language usage (Yuan et al., 2021). Ensuring accuracy and reliability remains a challenge for developers and educators (Li, 2022).

✓ Overreliance on Technology: Excessive reliance on AI tools may lead to a diminished focus on traditional language learning methods, such as conversational practice and cultural immersion. Balancing AI use with other pedagogical approaches is essential for a comprehensive language education (Lee, 2022).

D. Previous Studies

To frame the study on students' perceptions of AI-powered assistants in enhancing English speaking proficiency, several key studies provide valuable insights.

Hsu and Chiu (2021) conducted a study on the impact of AI-powered language learning tools, specifically targeting English speaking proficiency. Their research, published in Educational Technology & Society, examines how AI tools, such as chatbots and virtual tutors, contribute to improving speaking skills among learners. This study is particularly relevant as it provides empirical evidence on the effectiveness of AI tools in enhancing speaking proficiency and offers detailed data on students' experiences and perceptions regarding these technologies.

Another significant contribution comes from Wang and Wang (2022), who performed a systematic review of students' perceptions of AI-assisted language learning. Their work, featured in Language Learning & Technology, synthesizes findings from various studies to present a comprehensive view of user experiences with AI tools. This review is crucial for understanding the broader context of how students perceive AI in language learning, which can help in crafting questions that address specific perceptions and experiences related to speaking proficiency.

In the study by Lee and Kim (2023), published in the Journal of Computer-Assisted Language Learning, the focus is on the effectiveness of AI in improving speaking skills among English language learners. This case study offers detailed analyses of user feedback and performance improvements, providing empirical data on how AI applications impact speaking proficiency. The insights from this study are instrumental in understanding the practical effectiveness of AI tools and formulating relevant questions about their perceived impact.

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Brown and Smith (2021) explored the effects of AI tools on student engagement and motivation in language learning environments. Their research, appearing in TESOL Quarterly, investigates how interactive features of AI tools influence students' enthusiasm and involvement in speaking practice. This study highlights the role of engagement and motivation, offering a valuable perspective on how these factors might affect students' perceptions of AI tools.

Lastly, Chen and Huang (2023) compared the impact of AI tools with traditional methods on English speaking proficiency in their study published in Journal of Language Teaching & Research. Their research provides a comparative analysis of AI versus traditional methods, presenting data on how different approaches affect speaking skills. This comparative perspective is essential for assessing the relative effectiveness of AI tools and understanding students' views on different learning methods.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

The study involved 120 students from Nam Can Tho University who are enrolled in English language courses. Participants were selected through stratified sampling to ensure representation across different academic levels and proficiency stages. This approach helps gather diverse perspectives on the use of AI-powered assistants.

Participants were chosen from different years of study (second-year, third-year, and final-year students) aging from 20 to 22 years old to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives regarding AI-powered language learning tools. The sample included students with varying levels of English proficiency, from beginner to advanced. This stratification provided insights into how AI tools are perceived across different stages of language development.

B. Instrument and Data Collection

The 20-item Likert scale questionnaire was adapted from various sources to address the effectiveness, usability, and impact of AI-powered language learning tools. Items focusing on personalization and effectiveness were adapted from Li (2022), while Kukulska-Hulme (2020) contributed to questions about accessibility and usability. Zhao et al. (2021) informed items on interactive practice, and Vasalou et al. (2022) provided insights into speech recognition and immediate feedback. Adaptations related to adaptive learning platforms were based on Chou & Hsu (2023), while Basturkmen & Lewis (2023) and Lee (2022) contributed items on chatbots and virtual tutors. Lastly, Yuan et al. (2021) provided items related to language translation apps. These adaptations ensure that the questionnaire effectively captures diverse aspects of AI in language learning, reflecting current research in the field.

A 20-item Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data on students' perceptions of AI-powered assistants. The questionnaire included items related to the effectiveness of these tools in enhancing speaking proficiency, usability, engagement, and perceived impact on language learning.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Students' Perceptions towards the Personalization and Effectiveness

This study's findings on students' perceptions of AI-powered language learning tools reveal positive views, particularly in areas like personalization, pronunciation improvement, and continuous practice. The results align with previous studies that examined similar themes, providing further insights into the effectiveness of AI tools in enhancing English speaking proficiency.

Table 1. Students' Perceptions of the Personalization and Effectiveness

Items	N	Mean	SD
1. AI-powered language learning tools offer personalized learning experiences.	110	4.06	.79
2. The use of AI in language learning helps in improving my pronunciation.	110	3.98	.77
3. Virtual tutors offer effective personalized instruction based on my learning needs.	110	4.22	.66
4. Speech recognition tools effectively help me assess and improve my speaking skills.	110	4.15	.75
5. Adaptive learning platforms adjust lesson difficulty appropriately based on my performance.	110	4.07	.77
6. AI-powered language learning tools help in reinforcing my strengths and addressing weaknesses.	110	3.85	.78
7. AI tools facilitate continuous practice and reinforcement of language skills.	110	3.99	.56

First, the perception that "AI-powered language learning tools offer personalized learning experiences" received a mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.79), indicating that students largely agree that these tools adapt to individual learning needs. This result mirrors Hsu and Chiu's (2021) findings, where AI tools, such as chatbots and virtual tutors, were shown to significantly enhance personalized learning by adjusting to each student's unique preferences and goals. The high level of agreement in both studies underscores the value of personalization in AI-powered language tools.

Regarding pronunciation, the statement "The use of AI in language learning helps in improving my pronunciation" earned a mean score of 3.98 (SD = 0.77). While students recognized the role of AI in improving pronunciation, the score suggests there may be variability in its effectiveness. This aligns with Wang and Wang's (2022) systematic review, which found that AI tools can assist with pronunciation improvement, but their effectiveness may depend on the quality of the technology and its integration into the learning process. Despite positive perceptions, there remains a gap

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between user expectations and the actual capabilities of AI pronunciation tools.

The highest-rated statement, "Virtual tutors offer effective personalized instruction based on my learning needs" (M = 4.22, SD = 0.66), demonstrates that students hold virtual tutors in high regard for providing tailored instruction. This finding is supported by Lee and Kim's (2023) study, which highlighted the role of virtual tutors in offering targeted feedback that enhances speaking proficiency. Both studies emphasize the effectiveness of AI tutors in delivering personalized learning experiences that resonate with individual needs.

In terms of speech recognition, students gave a strong endorsement to "Speech recognition tools effectively help me assess and improve my speaking skills" (M = 4.15, SD = 0.75). The positive feedback reflects the utility of these tools in offering real-time feedback and assessment, consistent with Brown and Smith's (2021) findings. Their research showed that speech recognition technology significantly contributes to improving speaking skills by providing immediate and interactive feedback during practice sessions.

Students also responded positively to "Adaptive learning platforms adjust lesson difficulty appropriately based on my performance" (M = 4.07, SD = 0.77). This highlights the perceived effectiveness of adaptive AI tools in tailoring lessons to student performance. Chen and Huang's (2023) comparative analysis similarly showed that adaptive platforms enhance language learning by continuously adjusting content to match students' skill levels, promoting consistent progress in speaking proficiency.

However, when asked if "AI-powered language learning tools help in reinforcing my strengths and addressing weaknesses," students rated this item slightly lower (M = 3.85, SD = 0.78). This suggests that while AI tools are effective, some students may feel that they do not fully cater to their individual strengths and areas for improvement. This finding parallels Hsu and Chiu's (2021) observation that although AI tools are generally useful, they may not always meet the nuanced needs of every learner.

Finally, students viewed AI tools favorably in terms of facilitating ongoing practice, as seen in the item "AI tools facilitate continuous practice and reinforcement of language skills" (M = 3.99, SD = 0.56). This positive perception aligns with Wang and Wang's (2022) research, which emphasized the role of AI in supporting continuous learning outside traditional settings, helping learners practice and reinforce skills consistently.

B. Students' Perceptions towards the Interactive Practice

The findings regarding AI-driven language learning tools reveal nuanced insights into students' perceptions of their effectiveness.

Table 2. Students' Perceptions of the Interactive Practice

Items	N	Mean	SD
8. AI-driven chatbots provide useful practice in real-time conversations.	110	3.98	.59
9. Language translation apps are helpful for understanding and practicing new vocabulary.	110	3.90	.85
10. AI-driven gamification elements make language learning more engaging.	110	3.76	.88
11. Chatbots effectively simulate real-life conversations, aiding in practical language use.	110	3.95	.78
12. Virtual language teachers provide clear and effective guidance in language learning.	110	3.79	.67
13. Speech recognition tools are easy to use and integrate well with my learning routine.	110	3.85	.59

The statement "AI-driven chatbots provide useful practice in real-time conversations" scored a mean of 3.98 (SD = 0.59), indicating that students generally find chatbots valuable for practicing conversations. This finding aligns with Lee and Kim's (2023) research, which highlighted the effectiveness of chatbots in simulating real-life conversations and providing practical language practice. The positive perception of chatbots for real-time interaction underscores their role in enhancing speaking proficiency by offering immersive conversational experiences.

In terms of language translation apps, the statement "Language translation apps are helpful for understanding and practicing new vocabulary" received a mean score of 3.90 (SD = 0.85). This suggests that while students appreciate the utility of translation apps for vocabulary acquisition, they perceive these tools as less impactful compared to other AI resources. This observation is consistent with Wang and Wang's (2022) systematic review, which acknowledged the benefits of translation apps in understanding and practicing vocabulary but noted that they may not be as effective in improving speaking skills directly.

The statement "AI-driven gamification elements make language learning more engaging" received a mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.88), reflecting moderate agreement among students regarding the role of gamification in enhancing engagement. Brown and Smith (2021) found that gamification features significantly contribute to student motivation and involvement in learning activities. The positive, though moderate, perception of gamification elements aligns with their findings, suggesting that while gamification enhances engagement, its impact varies among learners.

For the statement "Chatbots effectively simulate real-life conversations, aiding in practical language use," students gave a mean score of 3.95 (SD = 0.78). This result indicates a strong endorsement of chatbots for practical language use. This aligns with Lee and Kim's (2023) study, which emphasized the effectiveness of chatbots in providing simulated real-life interactions that support language learning. The positive response highlights the value of chatbots in offering practical, conversational practice that enhances speaking skills.

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Lastly, the statement "Virtual language teachers provide clear and effective guidance in language learning" scored a mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.67). While students view virtual teachers positively, the score suggests that there is room for improvement in the perceived effectiveness of their guidance. Chen and Huang (2023) noted that virtual teachers offer valuable support but may not always match the clarity and effectiveness of traditional instructional methods. The finding reflects a general appreciation for virtual teachers while indicating a need for further enhancement in their instructional impact.

C. Students' Perceptions towards the Usability, Accessibility, Challenges and Limitations

The study's results reveal nuanced insights into students' perceptions of AI-powered language learning tools, aligning with and building on findings from previous research.

Table 3. Students' Perceptions towards the Usability, Accessibility, Challenges and Limitations

Items	N	Mean	SD
14. AI-powered tools make language learning more accessible and convenient.	110	3.91	.77
15. Immediate feedback from AI systems enhances my language learning progress.	110	3.82	.80
16. The lack of human interaction in AI tools affects the quality of language learning.	110	3.94	.83
17. AI tools often provide accurate and reliable feedback on my language use.	110	3.94	.66
18. Overreliance on AI tools can detract from traditional language learning methods.	110	3.98	.63
19. The quality of AI tools is influenced by the algorithms and data used.	110	3.75	.73
20. Traditional methods of language learning should be balanced with AI tools for optimal results.	110	3.83	.75

Students rated "AI-powered tools make language learning more accessible and convenient" with a mean score of 3.91 (SD = 0.77), indicating a positive perception of AI tools in facilitating easy access to learning materials. This finding echoes Wang and Wang's (2022) work, which demonstrated how AI tools improve the convenience of language learning by offering resources that can be accessed at any time and from any location.

The mean score of 3.82 (SD = 0.80) for "Immediate feedback from AI systems enhances my language learning progress" reflects the importance students place on real-time feedback. This supports Hsu and Chiu's (2021) findings, which highlighted that timely feedback from AI tools helps learners correct mistakes promptly and enhances their language learning process.

The statement "The lack of human interaction in AI tools affects the quality of language learning" received a mean score of 3.94 (SD = 0.83), suggesting that students feel the absence of human interaction impacts their learning experience. This result is consistent with Chou and Hsu's (2023) research, which pointed out that while AI tools offer many benefits, they may lack the personal touch and nuanced feedback that human instructors provide.

A mean score of 3.94 (SD = 0.66) for "AI tools often provide accurate and reliable feedback on my language use" indicates that students generally view AI tools as reliable in offering feedback. This aligns with Chen and Huang's (2023) study, which emphasized the importance of the accuracy and reliability of AI tools in providing effective language learning support.

The mean score of 3.98 (SD = 0.63) for "Overreliance on AI tools can detract from traditional language learning methods" reflects concerns about the potential drawbacks of excessive dependence on AI. This finding resonates with Brown and Smith's (2021) study, which highlighted the need to balance AI tools with traditional methods to ensure a well-rounded language learning experience.

The statement "The quality of AI tools is influenced by the algorithms and data used" was rated with a mean score of 3.75 (SD = 0.73), showing students' awareness of the impact of algorithms and data quality on AI tool effectiveness. This perspective is in line with existing research that underscores the importance of robust algorithms and high-quality data in developing effective AI tools.

Finally, a mean score of 3.83 (SD = 0.75) for "Traditional methods of language learning should be balanced with AI tools for optimal results" suggests that students believe in the importance of integrating traditional learning approaches with AI tools. This finding reinforces the view presented by Brown and Smith (2021), who advocated for a balanced approach to maximize the benefits of both AI tools and conventional teaching methods.

V. CONCLUSION

The current study has investigated the perceptions of students about AI-powered assistants in augmenting their English speaking skills, thereby uncovering numerous significant findings pertaining to the efficacy and constraints of these instrumentalities. The findings suggest that language learning tools driven by artificial intelligence are seen as very advantageous in terms of providing customized learning experiences, enhancing pronunciation, and delivering constructive real-time feedback. The significance of virtual tutors and voice recognition systems lies in their capacity to customize training and evaluate speaking abilities, which is consistent with other studies conducted by Hsu and Chiu (2021) and Lee and Kim (2023), which highlighted the beneficial influence of artificial intelligence on speaking competence.

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Nevertheless, the research also emphasizes significant apprehension reported by students. A major disadvantage of AI technologies is the lack of human contact, which negatively impacts the overall quality of language acquisition. This view mirrors the conclusions of Chou and Hsu (2023), which indicate that although AI technologies give significant benefits, they are unable to completely duplicate the subtle feedback and personal involvement offered by human teachers. Furthermore, students voice apprehensions regarding the excessive dependence on AI technologies that may possibly undermine the significance of conventional language learning techniques, therefore endorsing the argument made by Brown and Smith (2021) for a well-rounded approach.

The data highlights the significance of the quality of AI tools, emphasizing that the efficacy of these tools is strongly linked to the algorithms and data employed. This finding aligns with the study conducted by Chen and Huang (2023), which emphasised the crucial importance of strong artificial intelligence systems in providing dependable feedback. Moreover, students acknowledge the accessibility and convenience offered by AI tools, which enable ongoing practice and learning, thereby supporting the conclusions of Wang and Wang (2022) on the benefits of AI in enhancing the accessibility of language learning.

In conclusion, although AI-driven language learning systems show potential progress and individualized assistance, it is essential to acknowledge their constraints, namely regarding human contact and the compatibility with conventional learning approaches. Further investigation is needed to determine how these tools might be improved to maximize language acquisition while including the advantages of conventional teaching methods.

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