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THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ENHANCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an increasingly influential tool in foreign language education, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environments. This article examines how AI-powered applications contribute to the development of specific English language skills among university students, particularly those aged 18-24. Using a qualitative comparative literature review and thematic analysis of three academic studies, the research focuses on the role of AI in improving speaking, writing, and vocabulary acquisition. The findings indicate that AI-based applications can support speaking development through pronunciation feedback, fluency practice, and conversational interaction. In writing, they assist learners with grammar correction, vocabulary selection, idea development, and text organization. Furthermore, AI tools provide opportunities for personalized vocabulary practice and immediate explanations of unfamiliar expressions. However, the analysis also identifies limitations, including overdependence on technology, inaccurate feedback, and reduced opportunities for independent language production. The article argues that AI can serve as an effective supplementary resource for university-level English learners when combined with independent practice and teacher guidance.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, English Language Learning, EFL Students, Speaking Skills, Writing Skills, Vocabulary Acquisition, Personalized Learning.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence has become an important part of modern education, particularly in foreign language learning. The development of AI-powered applications such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and automated writing assistants has introduced new opportunities for students to practise English beyond traditional classroom environments. Unlike conventional learning resources, these technologies can provide immediate responses, personalized explanations, and interactive learning experiences.

University students, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 24, represent an important group of language learners who frequently use digital technologies for academic and personal development. At this educational stage, students are generally expected to develop more advanced communication abilities, academic writing skills, and a wider vocabulary to meet university requirements and future professional demands.

Despite the growing availability of AI applications, their contribution to specific language skills requires further examination. While some applications primarily support writing accuracy and grammatical development, others focus on pronunciation, spoken interaction, and vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, understanding the different functions of AI tools is essential for determining how they can effectively support English language learning.

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METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach based on a comparative literature review and thematic analysis. Three academic studies were selected to examine the application of Artificial Intelligence in English language learning, with particular attention to university-level EFL learners.

The first source, Chung Kwan Lo et al.'s "Exploring the Application of ChatGPT in ESL/EFL Education and Related Research Issues: A Systematic Review of Empirical Studies" (2024), examines 70 empirical studies concerning the use of ChatGPT in English language education. It provides a broad overview of AI applications in writing, speaking, vocabulary, and other language-learning areas. This source is particularly useful for identifying the most frequently supported language skills and the limitations of existing research.

The second source, Jinming Du and Ben Kei Daniel's "Transforming Language Education: A Systematic Review of AI-Powered Chatbots for English as a Foreign Language Speaking Practice" (2024), analyses 24 studies published between 2017 and 2023. It focuses specifically on the use of AI-powered chatbots in developing speaking proficiency, pronunciation, fluency, and learners' confidence in spoken communication.

The third source, Naima Al-husban's "The Impact of AI-Assisted Language Learning Tools on Augmenting University EFL Students' Speaking Skills in Jordan" (2025), investigates the effectiveness of the ELSA speech analyzer application among 34 university students. The study compares AI-supported instruction with traditional teaching methods and evaluates different aspects of speaking performance, including pronunciation, intonation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar.

The analysis follows three main stages. First, the selected studies are examined to identify the specific language skills supported by AI applications. Second, their findings are compared to determine the educational benefits of AI-assisted learning for university students. Third, the potential limitations and challenges associated with using AI technologies in foreign language education are explored.

This research relies exclusively on secondary sources and does not involve surveys, interviews, or independently collected statistical data. Consequently, its conclusions are based on the comparison and interpretation of previously published academic research.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed that Artificial Intelligence contributes to English language learning through several interconnected areas, particularly speaking, writing, and vocabulary development.

One of the most noticeable applications of AI is in speaking development. AI-powered conversational tools allow students to practise English through simulated conversations without requiring a human speaking partner. These interactions provide opportunities to develop fluency, improve pronunciation, and become more confident in expressing ideas. Du and Daniel (2024) identified several benefits of chatbot-assisted speaking practice, including reduced speaking anxiety, improved pronunciation, and increased willingness to communicate.

Furthermore, Al-husban's (2025) study demonstrated positive results among university EFL students using the ELSA speech analyzer. Students receiving AI-supported instruction performed better than those taught through traditional assessment methods in overall speaking skills, including pronunciation, intonation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammar. These findings suggest that AI-based speech applications can provide useful support for developing oral communication abilities.

Another important area is writing development. AI-powered writing assistants can help students identify grammatical errors, improve sentence structure, select appropriate vocabulary, and organize their ideas more effectively. According to Lo et al. (2024), writing was the most frequently investigated area among the 70 studies included in their systematic review. The findings indicate that ChatGPT can assist learners in generating ideas, organizing paragraphs, correcting grammatical mistakes, and improving word choice.

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Vocabulary acquisition represents another significant area of AI-assisted learning. AI applications can explain unfamiliar words, provide synonyms and antonyms, demonstrate contextual usage, and generate personalized exercises according to learners' needs. These functions allow students to explore not only the meanings of individual words but also their appropriate use in different contexts. However, the selected literature indicates that vocabulary development has received less research attention than writing, making further investigation necessary.

Overall, the results suggest that AI technologies provide different forms of support depending on the language skill being developed. Their effectiveness is particularly visible in activities requiring repeated practice, immediate feedback, and individual learning support.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that Artificial Intelligence can play a valuable role in developing English language proficiency among university students. However, its contribution differs depending on the particular skill and the way the technology is incorporated into the learning process.

Speaking is one of the areas in which AI applications offer particularly practical opportunities. University students may understand English grammar and vocabulary but still experience difficulties when communicating spontaneously. Fear of making mistakes, limited speaking opportunities, and insufficient confidence can negatively affect their oral performance. AI-powered chatbots provide a relatively comfortable environment in which learners can practise conversations repeatedly without the immediate pressure of communicating with another person. In addition, speech recognition applications can identify certain pronunciation difficulties and provide feedback on individual sounds, word stress, and intonation. Nevertheless, AI interaction cannot fully replace real communication with people because human conversations involve cultural awareness, emotional understanding, and unpredictable responses.

Writing development is another important aspect, particularly for university students who regularly complete academic assignments, essays, and research projects. AI writing assistants can support different stages of the writing process, beginning with idea generation and continuing through drafting, revision, and proofreading. For example, students who experience difficulties organizing their thoughts can request suggestions for paragraph structure or ask for explanations of grammatical errors. This makes AI a useful learning resource rather than simply a correction tool. However, students should avoid allowing AI to produce complete assignments on their behalf, as excessive dependence may reduce independent thinking and the ability to develop original arguments.

Vocabulary acquisition also deserves particular attention because a limited vocabulary can affect both speaking and writing performance. AI tools can introduce new words through contextual examples, explain differences between similar expressions, and provide exercises based on individual learning needs. For instance, a student preparing for an academic presentation can request topic-related vocabulary, collocations, and examples of how these expressions are used in natural communication. This type of personalized practice can make vocabulary learning more relevant to students' academic and professional goals.

Another important consideration is the age and educational background of learners. University students aged approximately 18-24 are the main focus of this study because they frequently encounter academic tasks that require independent language development and digital learning skills. At this stage, students may benefit from AI-supported activities that complement classroom instruction and allow them to practise English according to their individual proficiency levels. However, the effectiveness of these tools should not be assumed to be identical across all age groups, since younger learners and older adults may have different educational needs and levels of digital experience.

Despite these advantages, several limitations must be considered. First, AI-generated explanations and corrections are not always accurate, meaning that learners should critically evaluate the information provided. Second, excessive dependence on AI may prevent students from developing independent

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problem-solving and language-production abilities. Third, AI applications cannot completely reproduce authentic communication situations or replace the professional guidance of language teachers. Lo et al. (2024) also identified concerns related to inaccurate information, privacy, and academic dishonesty in AI-supported English education.

Therefore, the most effective approach is not to replace traditional language instruction with Artificial Intelligence but to integrate AI applications as supplementary learning resources. Students should use these technologies to receive feedback, practise difficult language areas, and identify weaknesses while continuing to develop their own communication and critical-thinking abilities.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the role of Artificial Intelligence in enhancing English language skills among university students, particularly those aged 18-24. The analysis focused on three major areas: speaking, writing, and vocabulary acquisition. The reviewed studies indicate that AI-powered applications can provide personalized learning opportunities, immediate feedback, and additional practice outside traditional classroom environments.

The findings suggest that conversational AI tools can support pronunciation, fluency, and speaking confidence, while writing assistants help learners improve grammar, vocabulary selection, and text organization. Furthermore, AI-based vocabulary activities can facilitate the understanding and contextual use of unfamiliar expressions.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of AI-assisted language learning depends on responsible and balanced use. Inaccurate feedback, technological dependence, and reduced independent practice remain important challenges. Consequently, Artificial Intelligence should be considered a supplementary educational resource rather than a replacement for teachers, authentic communication, or individual learning efforts.

Further research involving different age groups, longer learning periods, and direct comparisons of AI-supported and traditional teaching methods would provide a deeper understanding of the long-term influence of Artificial Intelligence on English language acquisition.

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