

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHATGPT IN SPEAKING PRACTICE: A STUDY AT THE FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES, HONG DUC UNIVERSITY

Le Minh Huyen¹, Nguyen Thi Quyet²

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Abstract: *This study explores second-year students' perceptions of ChatGPT in English speaking practice at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. Using a mixed-methods design, the research collected questionnaire data from 100 students and interview data from 12 participants. The study examined five dimensions: ways of applying ChatGPT, perceived usefulness, convenience, limitations, and appropriateness. The findings show that students generally viewed ChatGPT positively, especially for preparation and out-of-class support. They often used it to prepare vocabulary, organize responses, and practise dialogues. However, they also pointed out limitations such as inaccurate answers, unnatural language, and overdependence. The study suggests that ChatGPT can support speaking practice, but should be used as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for real interaction.*

Keywords: *ChatGPT, speaking practice, students' perceptions, generative AI, EFL learners, higher education.*

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence has become increasingly visible in education, including foreign language learning [4][7]. ChatGPT, among recent AI tools, has drawn particular attention since it can generate human-like responses, give immediate support, and assist learners with different academic tasks [2][4]. In higher education, students often recognize both the learning value of generative AI and its possible drawbacks, especially in relation to usefulness, accuracy, privacy, and ethics [4].

Speaking is widely regarded as one of the most difficult skills in English language learning since learners must generate ideas quickly, produce language in real time, and respond appropriately in communication [1][9][13]. Many EFL learners also struggle with limited vocabulary, hesitation, low confidence, and a lack of opportunities to practise beyond the classroom [1][9][13]. In this situation, ChatGPT may serve as a useful source of support for idea preparation, language preparation, and extra practice outside class [2][10][11].

¹ Student of English Language Teacher Education, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University; Email: leminhhuyen0304@gmail.com

² Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University

Although earlier studies have discussed students' perceptions of generative AI in higher education [4], reviewed the growing literature on ChatGPT in foreign language teaching and learning [7], and examined students' use of ChatGPT together with its perceived benefits and costs [2], limited attention has been given to students' perceptions of ChatGPT in English speaking practice in a specific EFL university context. The present study, for this reason, focuses on second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. This group was selected as second-year students had already experienced university-level speaking courses and were therefore able to reflect on the role of ChatGPT in speaking-related learning. Additionally, the researcher had practical access to this cohort during the data collection process. The study, more specifically, explores how these students apply ChatGPT in speaking practice and how they evaluate its usefulness, convenience, limitations, and appropriateness for this purpose.

1.1. Dimensions of students' perceptions of AI tools

Students' perceptions offer a useful way to understand how a technological tool is understood, accepted, and used in educational settings. In language learning, perception includes not only liking or disliking a tool, but also judging its value, practicality, and role in the learning process [2]. In studies on generative AI, these perceptions are often discussed through usefulness, convenience, limitations, and appropriateness [2][4].

The current study is organized around five dimensions: the application of ChatGPT in speaking practice, its usefulness, its convenience, its limitations, and its appropriateness. These dimensions were selected since they reflect both actual use and evaluation of the tool in speaking-related learning [2][4]. Previous studies suggested that ChatGPT could support brainstorming, idea preparation, and dialogue practice [2][10][11]. Perceived usefulness is linked to the Technology Acceptance Model, in which usefulness refers to the extent to which a technology is believed to improve performance [6]. Convenience, in this research, is associated mainly with accessibility and flexibility. Limitations include inaccuracy, unnatural language, reliability, privacy, ethics, and overdependence [2][4][12]. Appropriateness concerns whether ChatGPT is considered suitable as a support tool without replacing authentic human interaction [2][11].

1.2. English speaking practice in the EFL context

Speaking practice plays a vital role in EFL learning since it allows learners to use language for communication rather than only for recognition or analysis [3][9]. Unlike receptive skills, speaking requires learners to express ideas immediately, organize thoughts clearly, choose suitable vocabulary, and respond within limited time [3][9][13]. For that reason, it is often seen as demanding for EFL learners, especially where authentic communication opportunities are limited [1][13].

In EFL classrooms, speaking practice often includes answering questions, expressing opinions, taking part in discussions, and performing dialogues or role-plays. Learners, through these activities, are expected to improve not only fluency but also idea organization

and language choice [3][9]. Still, many learners face difficulties due to limited vocabulary, hesitation, low confidence, and insufficient practice outside class [1][9][13]. In such a context, ChatGPT may offer additional support by suggesting vocabulary, organizing responses, and extending speaking-related practice beyond classroom time [2][4][10].

2. Methodology

2.1. Design of the study

This study carried out an investigation to obtain a broader understanding of second-year students' perceptions of ChatGPT in speaking practice at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. The quantitative strand was conducted through a questionnaire while the qualitative one was carried out through semi-structured interviews [5].

2.2. Participants

The participants were 100 second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. Among them, 73% were female, 11% were male, and 16% preferred not to say. In terms of specialization, 85% majored in English Language and 15% in English Language Teacher Education. All respondents reported using ChatGPT, and 91% had used it for English speaking practice. 12 students, in addition, were selected from the questionnaire respondents for semi-structured interviews.

2.3. Data gathering instruments

Two instruments were used in the study: a questionnaire and a set of interview questions. Both were built around five dimensions: ways of applying ChatGPT in speaking practice, perceived usefulness, convenience, limitations, and appropriateness. The questionnaire served as the main source of quantitative data, while the interviews were used to clarify and deepen the survey findings. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale. For the items on ways of applying ChatGPT, the scale ranged from 1 = Never to 5 = Always. For the other four dimensions, the scale ranged from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree.

2.4. Data collection procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to 100 second-year students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. Before participation, the students were informed about the purpose of the study and were assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used only for research purposes. After the questionnaire data had been collected, 12 students were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews.

2.5. Data analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, and mean score [5]. The analysis was organized around the five dimensions of the study. In each dimension, the responses were examined item by item to identify the aspects that received stronger or weaker support.

Content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data [8]. The interview responses were grouped according to the same five dimensions so that the two sets of data could be interpreted together. Repeated ideas and explanations were then identified in order to clarify how students understood the role of ChatGPT in speaking practice. After that, the quantitative and qualitative findings were compared to form a broader interpretation of students' views on AI-supported speaking practice.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Ways of applying ChatGPT in speaking practice

To investigate how students applied ChatGPT in speaking practice, six questionnaire items were used. These items focused on brainstorming ideas, preparing vocabulary and useful expressions, organizing possible responses, practising dialogues, practising outside the classroom, and obtaining support during speaking preparation. In this part of the questionnaire, a five-point frequency scale was used in order to identify how often students applied ChatGPT in each way: 1 corresponds to Never, 2 corresponds to Rarely, 3 corresponds to Sometimes, 4 corresponds to Often, and 5 corresponds to Always.

Table 1. Ways of applying ChatGPT in speaking practice

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	SD
1	I use ChatGPT to brainstorm ideas for speaking topics.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	76 (76%)	22 (22%)	4.20	.449
2	I use ChatGPT to prepare vocabulary and useful expressions for speaking tasks.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	26 (26%)	26 (26%)	48 (48%)	4.22	.836
3	I use ChatGPT to organize possible responses before speaking.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (29%)	26 (26%)	45 (45%)	4.16	.849
4	I use ChatGPT to practise dialogues or simulated conversations.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (20%)	39 (39%)	41 (41%)	4.21	.756
5	I use ChatGPT to practise speaking outside the classroom.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	63 (63%)	34 (34%)	4.31	.526
6	I use ChatGPT to get explanations or support during speaking preparation.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	37 (37%)	59 (59%)	4 (4%)	3.67	.551

As presented in Table 1, all six items recorded relatively high mean scores, ranging from 3.67 to 4.31. Practising speaking outside the classroom received the highest mean ($M = 4.31$, $SD = .526$), followed by preparing vocabulary and expressions ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .836$) and

practising dialogues or simulated conversations ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .756$). Obtaining explanations or support had the lowest mean ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .551$). The particularly high proportion of students selecting Often or Always for practising outside the classroom (97%) indicates that ChatGPT was frequently used beyond formal classroom activities.

The interview data provide deeper insights into these findings. Student 2 said, “I usually use ChatGPT in several ways when I practise English speaking. First, I often ask it to give me ideas for speaking topics because sometimes I do not know what to say or how to start my answer.” The same participant also stated, “The most common way I use ChatGPT is to prepare vocabulary and useful expressions for speaking topics. The reason is that lack of vocabulary is one of my biggest difficulties when speaking English.” Student 12 added, “There are also times when I use it to practise dialogues or short conversations, especially when I do not have a partner to practise with.”

Viewed as a whole, this section suggests that students mainly used ChatGPT for preparation and self-practice rather than for replacing real speaking. Vocabulary support, response planning, and dialogue practice appeared to be the most common forms of use.

3.2. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's usefulness in speaking practice

Five questionnaire items were used to examine perceived usefulness. These items addressed idea generation, vocabulary preparation, organization of ideas, preparation for speaking tasks, and support for independent speaking practice. In this section, a five-point agreement scale was used, where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree.

Table 2. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's usefulness in speaking practice

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	SD
1	ChatGPT is useful for generating ideas for speaking topics.	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	22 (22%)	37 (37%)	38 (38%)	4.10	.847
2	ChatGPT is useful for preparing vocabulary and useful expressions for speaking.	0 (0%)	3 (3%)	21 (21%)	40 (40%)	36 (36%)	4.09	.830
3	ChatGPT is useful for organizing ideas before speaking.	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	20 (20%)	43 (43%)	35 (35%)	4.11	.790
4	ChatGPT is useful for preparing more effectively for speaking tasks.	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	21 (21%)	38 (38%)	39 (39%)	4.14	.817
5	ChatGPT is useful for supporting independent speaking practice.	0 (0%)	2 (2%)	28 (28%)	45 (45%)	25 (25%)	3.93	.782

The data reveal consistently positive perceptions, with mean scores between 3.93 and 4.14. Preparing more effectively for speaking tasks received the highest mean ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .817$), while independent speaking practice obtained the lowest ($M = 3.93$, $SD = .782$). Agreement or strong agreement was reported by 75% of students for preparation before speaking tasks and 78% for organizing ideas.

The interview answers support this pattern. Student 5 explained, "I think ChatGPT is useful for my speaking practice in several ways. First, it helps me generate ideas when I am not sure how to respond to a speaking topic." The same participant continued, "Second, it supports me in preparing vocabulary and expressions that are suitable for the topic, which makes my speaking more organized and natural." Student 9 also said, "For me, the most important useful aspect of ChatGPT is that it helps me prepare more effectively before speaking."

In summary, students valued ChatGPT most when it helped them get ready before speaking. Idea generation, vocabulary preparation, and response organization were the areas in which its usefulness was recognized most strongly.

3.3. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's convenience in speaking practice

In this section, the same five-point agreement scale as in Table 2 was used. The items focused on availability, easy access, flexibility outside the classroom, and quick support during speaking preparation.

Table 3. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's convenience in speaking practice

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	SD
1	ChatGPT is convenient because I can use it anytime I need help with speaking practice.	1 (1%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	40 (40%)	36 (36%)	3.98	1.025
2	ChatGPT is convenient because it is easy to access.	11 (11%)	1 (1%)	18 (18%)	56 (56%)	14 (14%)	3.61	1.100
3	ChatGPT is convenient because it makes speaking practice more flexible outside the classroom.	1 (1%)	3 (3%)	29 (29%)	32 (32%)	35 (35%)	3.97	.926
4	ChatGPT is convenient because it provides quick support for speaking preparation.	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	30 (30%)	41 (41%)	26 (26%)	3.89	.852

The findings show that students generally perceived ChatGPT as a convenient tool for speaking practice. Among the four aspects, the ability to use ChatGPT whenever help was needed received the highest mean score ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.025$), indicating that its availability

was an important aspect of convenience. Flexibility outside the classroom was also highly rated ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.926$), while quick support during preparation received a slightly lower mean score ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 0.852$). In comparison, ease of access had the lowest mean score ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.100$), although 56% of students agreed that ChatGPT was easy to access.

Student 11 stated, “Yes, I think ChatGPT is very convenient for speaking practice. One important reason is that I can use it anytime I need help.” The same participant added, “Another reason is that it is very easy to access. I can use it on my phone or laptop, so it is quite flexible for my daily learning.” Student 4 also said, “The responses are usually immediate, which makes it easier for me to solve problems quickly when I am preparing for a speaking task.”

From these data, convenience emerged as one of the strongest positive features of ChatGPT in speaking practice. Easy access, flexible use outside class, and immediate support were the aspects students appreciated most.

3.4. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's limitations in speaking practice

The same agreement scale as in Table 2 was used in this section. The items addressed inaccurate responses, unnatural language, dependence, reliability, and privacy or ethical concerns.

Table 4. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's limitations in speaking practice

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	SD
1	Sometimes ChatGPT gives inaccurate responses for speaking practice.	0 (0%)	12 (12%)	40 (40%)	12 (12%)	36 (36%)	3.72	1.083
2	Some responses from ChatGPT sound unnatural for real speaking situations.	1 (1%)	27 (27%)	11 (11%)	28 (28%)	33 (33%)	3.65	1.226
3	Excessive use of ChatGPT may lead to dependence on it.	10 (10%)	10 (10%)	27 (27%)	32 (32%)	21 (21%)	3.44	1.217
4	I am concerned about the reliability of the information provided by ChatGPT.	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	27 (27%)	61 (61%)	10 (10%)	3.78	.675
5	I am concerned about privacy or ethical issues when using ChatGPT for speaking practice.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	31 (31%)	35 (35%)	34 (34%)	4.03	.810

The results reveal that students were aware of several limitations when using ChatGPT for speaking practice. Privacy and ethical issues attracted the strongest concern ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.810$), while reliability of responses also received a relatively high mean score ($M = 3.78$,

SD = 0.675). Concerns about inaccurate information (M = 3.72, SD = 1.083) and unnatural language (M = 3.65, SD = 1.226) were also evident. In addition, more than half of the students agreed that excessive use of ChatGPT might lead to dependence, although this concern received the lowest mean among the five limitation-related items (M = 3.44, SD = 1.217).

Student 10 said, "Sometimes its responses are not completely accurate, so I feel that I need to check the information again before using it." The same student also noted, "In some cases, the language it gives sounds too formal or unnatural for real speaking situations." In relation to dependence, Student 6 stated, "If I rely on ChatGPT too much, I may become less active in thinking for myself." These interview responses provide a clearer explanation of the concerns reflected in the results.

A different picture appears in this section, where students showed clear awareness of the weaknesses of ChatGPT. Inaccuracy, unnatural language, and the possibility of overdependence stood out as the main concerns in their responses.

3.5. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's appropriateness for speaking practice

This section also used the same agreement scale as in Table 2. The items focused on ChatGPT as a support tool, a preparation tool, an out-of-class practice tool, and its relationship to real interaction with teachers or classmates.

Table 5. Students' perceptions of ChatGPT's appropriateness for speaking practice

No.	Items	1	2	3	4	5	Mean score	SD
1	ChatGPT is appropriate as a support tool for English speaking practice.	0 (0%)	10 (10%)	22 (22%)	54 (54%)	14 (14%)	3.72	.830
2	ChatGPT is appropriate for preparation before actual speaking tasks.	3 (3%)	0 (0%)	27 (27%)	32 (32%)	38 (38%)	4.02	.964
3	ChatGPT is appropriate for speaking practice outside the classroom.	1 (1%)	2 (2%)	23 (23%)	34 (34%)	40 (40%)	4.10	.893
4	ChatGPT cannot fully replace real interaction with teachers or classmates in speaking practice.	1 (1%)	8 (8%)	14 (14%)	59 (59%)	18 (18%)	3.85	.845

The data suggest that students considered ChatGPT appropriate mainly as a supplementary resource for speaking practice. Its use for speaking practice outside the classroom received the highest mean score (M = 4.10, SD = 0.893), followed by its role in preparing for actual speaking tasks (M = 4.02, SD = 0.964). The lowest mean was found for using ChatGPT as a general support tool (M = 3.72, SD = 0.830). Importantly, 77% of students agreed or strongly agreed that ChatGPT could not fully replace real interaction with teachers or classmates, highlighting the continued importance of human interaction in speaking development.

The interview findings reinforce this view as student 8 stated, “Yes, I think ChatGPT is appropriate as a support tool for English speaking practice.” The same participant then added, “I think it is appropriate only as a support tool, not as the main way of learning speaking.” Most importantly, student 1 said, “No, I do not think ChatGPT can replace real interaction with teachers or classmates in speaking practice.”

In short, students accepted ChatGPT within certain limits. They regarded it as suitable for support and preparation, yet still believed that actual speaking development required real interaction with teachers or classmates.

3.6. Discussion

The data indicate that students generally held positive but careful perceptions of ChatGPT in speaking practice. They reported frequent use of ChatGPT for vocabulary preparation, idea organization, dialogue practice, and out-of-class support. Still, they also raised concerns about inaccurate responses, unnatural language, unreliability, overdependence, and the limits of AI in replacing real interaction. These results suggest that students mainly saw ChatGPT as a support resource rather than a substitute for authentic communication.

In several respects, the findings are consistent with earlier studies. Students’ positive evaluations of usefulness and convenience resemble the findings of Chan and Hu [4] and Blahopoulou and Ortiz-Bonnin [2], who also reported that students often recognized the academic value of generative AI while remaining aware of its drawbacks. The present study also aligns with Ravšelj et al. [10] and Üstünbaş [11] in showing that learners used ChatGPT in practical ways such as brainstorming, preparation, and speaking-related support. A more specific contribution of the current study is that, in this EFL context, students appeared to value ChatGPT most strongly for speaking preparation, especially for vocabulary support and response organization before oral tasks. Students’ awareness of inaccurate responses, reliability issues, and overdependence also echoes the concerns reported by Chan and Hu [4] and Xu et al. [12]. At the same time, the present study places these issues more directly in the context of speaking practice, where unnatural or inaccurate responses may affect oral performance more immediately.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated second-year students’ perceptions of ChatGPT in speaking practice at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hong Duc University. The findings show that students generally perceived ChatGPT positively, especially in terms of usefulness and convenience. ChatGPT mainly helped students prepare vocabulary, organize responses, practise dialogues, and support speaking practice outside the classroom. Students were also aware of important limitations, including inaccurate responses, unnatural language use, reliability concerns, privacy and ethical issues, and the risk of overdependence. Additionally, although ChatGPT was considered an appropriate support tool, students did not believe that it could replace real interaction with teachers or classmates. ChatGPT can therefore be integrated into English speaking practice in higher education when it is used critically and pedagogically as a supplementary resource.

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