AI-ENHANCED COMMUNICATIVE TASKS FOR IMPROVING EFL SPEAKING SKILLS: A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has created new opportunities for developing speaking skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. This study examines the methodological potential of AI-supported communicative tasks in enhancing university students' speaking competence. A framework integrating AI-based platforms such as Replika, TalkPal, ELSA Speak, Speechling, Kialo Edu, and Speechace is proposed. The results show that AI-supported tasks significantly improve pronunciation, fluency, lexical resources, discourse coherence, and critical speaking skills. The study concludes that systematic AI integration promotes learner autonomy and personalized speaking practice in higher education.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, EFL speaking skills, communicative tasks, pronunciation, lexical resources, methodological framework.

INTRODUCTION

Developing speaking skills remains one of the most challenging aspects of EFL instruction. Learners often experience limited exposure to authentic communication and insufficient feedback. Recent advances in artificial intelligence offer new opportunities to address these challenges. AI-based platforms enable interactive speaking practice, real-time feedback, and individualized learning pathways. This article proposes a methodological framework for integrating AI-based communicative tasks into EFL speaking instruction.

Methodology. The study adopts a design-based pedagogical approach focused on integrating AI-supported communicative tasks into EFL speaking instruction. The instructional framework is grounded in communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, individualized learning, and reflective practice [4; 78–80-p.]. These approaches ensure that speaking activities remain meaningful, learner-centered, and contextually relevant.

AI platforms were selected according to their pedagogical relevance to specific speaking sub-skills. Replika was employed to facilitate emotionally responsive dialogue and spontaneous interaction. TalkPal was used to support contextual communication, visual storytelling, and narrative construction. ELSA Speak, Speechace, and Speechling were applied to address pronunciation accuracy, phonetic awareness, and prosodic development. Kialo Edu was integrated to develop argumentative speaking and critical thinking skills through structured debate tasks.

The communicative tasks were organized progressively to target different dimensions of speaking competence. Emotional and dialogic speaking tasks were implemented through simulated conversations using Replika, allowing learners to express opinions and emotions in

a low-anxiety environment. This stage emphasized fluency, spontaneous speech production, and emotional expression through person-centered learning and reflective practice.

Contextual and narrative speaking tasks were conducted using TalkPal. Visual prompts, thematic vocabulary, and story completion activities were designed in accordance with task-based learning principles. These tasks encouraged learners to construct coherent narratives, expand lexical resources, and apply vocabulary appropriately within specific communicative contexts.

Pronunciation-focused tasks were implemented using ELSA Speak, Speechace, and Speechling. Learners recorded spoken input and received AI-generated feedback on phoneme articulation, word stress, rhythm, and intonation. The shadowing technique supported by Speechling played a key role in improving prosodic accuracy and speech naturalness by modeling native-speaker pronunciation patterns.

Argumentative speaking tasks were facilitated through Kialo Edu, where learners engaged in debate preparation and simulation on ethically complex topics such as genetic engineering and nuclear energy. The platform's structured argument-mapping interface enabled students to organize ideas logically, anticipate counterarguments, and articulate reasoned oral responses.

Assessment was embedded throughout the learning process using AI-generated performance reports and reflective analysis. Learners reviewed pronunciation errors, fluency disruptions, and lexical limitations, followed by task repetition and self-evaluation. This formative assessment process aligns with the principles of Assessment for Learning and supports continuous speaking development [5; 92–94-p.].

Results. The implementation of AI-supported communicative tasks resulted in noticeable improvements across multiple dimensions of EFL speaking competence. The outcomes varied depending on the AI platform used and the pedagogical method applied.

Pronunciation-focused platforms such as ELSA Speak, Speechace, and Speechling led to significant improvement in phonological accuracy. Learners demonstrated clearer vowel and consonant articulation, more accurate word stress placement, and improved sentence-level intonation.

The availability of immediate, detailed feedback enhanced phonological awareness and contributed to greater speech intelligibility [6; 55–57-p.].

Fluency development was most strongly influenced by dialogue-based interaction using Replika. Learners exhibited reduced hesitation, smoother speech flow, and increased confidence during spontaneous speaking. The emotionally responsive nature of AI interlocutors helped lower speaking anxiety and encouraged sustained oral interaction.

Lexical resource development was particularly evident in narrative and visual storytelling tasks implemented through TalkPal. Learners expanded their thematic vocabulary, improved collocational accuracy, and demonstrated greater contextual appropriateness in lexical selection. These tasks supported extended spoken discourse and improved overall communicative effectiveness.

Discourse coherence and argumentative competence improved significantly through debate-oriented tasks using Kialo Edu. Learners became more capable of structuring arguments logically, responding to opposing viewpoints, and maintaining coherence during oral debates.

These outcomes indicate a strong relationship between AI-supported argumentation tools and the development of critical speaking skills.

Across all platforms, AI-based feedback mechanisms promoted learner autonomy and reflective speaking practice. Students increasingly engaged in self-monitoring, independent error correction, and voluntary speaking activities beyond classroom boundaries, which contributed to sustained motivation and continuous skill development [7; 134–136-p.].

DISCUSSION

The findings confirm that AI-supported communicative tasks effectively address several limitations of traditional EFL speaking instruction. By integrating AI technologies with communicative and task-based pedagogical approaches, educators can provide personalized, authentic, and continuous speaking practice [8; 67-p.]. Unlike conventional classroom methods, AI-based tools extend learning opportunities beyond time and space constraints, enabling learners to practice speaking at their own pace and according to individual needs [9; 201-p.].

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of AI integration depends on thoughtful instructional design and teacher mediation. AI technologies should be viewed as pedagogical tools that complement, rather than replace, human instruction. Teachers play a crucial role in selecting appropriate tasks, guiding reflection, and ensuring meaningful communicative outcomes [10; 88-p.].

Conclusion. This study confirms that artificial intelligence–based communicative tasks significantly enhance EFL speaking skills. The proposed methodological framework demonstrates how AI tools can be systematically integrated into speaking instruction to improve pronunciation, lexical resources, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and interactional competence. The results suggest that AI does not replace the teacher's role but complements traditional instruction by extending speaking practice opportunities beyond the classroom. Future research should explore longitudinal effects of AI-supported speaking instruction and investigate learner attitudes toward AI-mediated communication.

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