Availing the Amorphous Speaking Partner of Artificial Intelligence: An Attempt to Alleviate Speaking Anxiety

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Abstract. This study aims to describe how the avail of Artificial Intelligence-based ChatGPT as an amorphous speaking partner helps alleviate students' speaking anxiety. By employing a classroom action research (CAR) method, this study involved 42 students in an English Department class in a private university in Malang. The participants were 32 female students and 10 male students in a Basic English-Speaking class. The researchers employed purposive sampling and chose those forty-two students as the research subjects as they indicated speaking anxiety. The procedure of this research included one cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The findings portrayed that the use of chatting through voice in ChatGPT was a great success in alleviating students' speaking anxiety. The success was reflected on the leap of students' speaking performance after the utilization of artificial intelligence-based speaking partner. The observation carried out during this study supported the finding as the majority of the students were indicated as more active and confident in performing speaking attempts through ChatGPT compared to when they were required to speak to their peers. Also, the interview with students confirmed that they did not feel pressure when they spoke with ChatGPT as much as when they faced real humans. Thus, the utilization of AI-based ChatGPT voice feature is advised to be used to reduce speaking anxiety in other contexts and subjects.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of learning English as Foreign Language (EFL), speaking challenges are greatly encountered. Previous research confirmed that students faced difficulties in acquiring speaking competence (Kulsum, et. al., 2025; Hameed & Jawad, 2024; Arifin, 2017). Those studies marked various problems in speaking such as understanding grammar, fluency, pronunciation, lack of vocabularies, and such. Interestingly, all studies included

speaking anxiety as the core problem encountered by students acquiring English speaking skill. Kusumawardhani & Lestari (2022) identified speaking anxiety to potentially arise as the ideal good speaker should portray fluent and accurate performance. They also marked that speaking anxiety may result in two manners; driving students to get prepared or leading to worse speaking performance.

Speaking anxiety in this study refers to Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) which is defined as one affective condition which predispose a foreign language process in negative light (Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017). In extreme level, Suleimenova (2013) found that one's may be uncertain of their own abilities, difficult to utter speech in front of others, and become self-conscious and inhibited speakers. Previous studies confirmed that speaking anxiety chipped in contributing to students' performance in expressing verbal utterances (Djahimo, et al., 2018; Kasap & Power, 2019; Rahmadani & Etfita, 2022; Nababan & Lestariningsih, 2024; Ady & Mardiah, 2024). The contributing factors of students' speaking anxiety have been greatly observed in past studies such as fear of negative feedback, communication anxiety, and test anxiety (Yahya, 2013), speaking in front of others, fear of making grammatical mistakes, mispronunciation, and inability of expressing ideas (Awan et al., 2010), gender role (Gaibani and Elmenfi, 2014), embarrassment and low self-confidence (Ihmuda, 2014).

The researchers carried out a preliminary observation in a speaking class in English Department in a private university in Malang and suggested that speaking anxiety was one of the primary challenges encountered by the students. Most students were found stuttered a lot while expressing their ideas. They also tended to stare at the ceiling or the floor instead of setting their eyes to the audience (peers). The researchers also asked several questions to random sample of the students and concluded some insights. Student A stated that he got nervous of getting negative evaluation from the lecturer and peers. Student B shared that she got sweaty hands and her heart beat fast from the limited vocabularies she had in mind. She added that she was scared of receiving critics on her speaking performance. The results of the preliminary study are evident to indicate that the researchers spotted instructional problem of speaking anxiety.

The appearance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has initiated varied sentiments, both in positive and negative lights. Some views AI as a refreshing method which sells the more personalized learning and the 'medicine' of students' particular needs (Walter, 2024). AI enables humans to learn numerous topics and various array of teaching and learning activities, including having learning assistants in the form of bots (Fitria, 2021). AI-based applications have been widely integrated in educational context such as Duolingo which advances in enhancing learning experiences (Bicknell et al., 2023), iFlyTek which offers intelligent assessment systems along with varied grading schemes (iFlyTek, 2024), and Docebo which is an AI-powered Learning Management System (LMS) which performs well in supporting content creation, administrative task automation, and personalized learning (Leh, 2022).

Among AI-powered tools, the researchers opt for ChatGPT in this study as the utilization is relatively hassle-free and user-friendly. ChatGPT has been considered as a technological breakthrough which allows humans and machines to collaborate (Xu, et al., 2021). The researchers are in one voice of selecting ChatGPT as a tool to alleviate students'

speaking anxiety since it features the ability to interact in natural conversation where users can ask a series of questions and get the feedback from the tool (Rospigliosi, 2023). Numerous previous research are evident in proving that the use of ChatGPT is excellent in enhancing students' speaking competence. The utilization of ChatGPT was successful in reducing language anxiety (Nuñez, et al., 2025), outlining the technical features superiorities such as personalized conversation practice, real-time verbal interaction, and intelligent feedback (Phuong, 2024), and creating a sense of calm and comfort for the students (Wang, 2025).

Based on the results of the preliminary study and literature review above, the researchers attempt to alleviate students' speaking anxiety through the utilization of voice feature in ChatGPT as their amorphous speaking partner. Through a one-cycle classroom action research scheme, this study aims to examine how voice feature in ChatGPT alleviate students' speaking anxiety in a context of foreign language learning. Works from researchers may be abundant in the context of speaking anxiety and the use of Artificial Intelligence, but there is still limited study on the use of voice feature in ChatGPT specifically to decrease Indonesian students' speaking anxiety in learning English as Foreign Language. Thus, the findings of this study may contribute to the knowledge of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and the varieties or contexts of using AI in higher education setting. To this, the researchers formulate the following research question: How can the avail of voice feature in ChatGPT help alleviating students' speaking anxiety?

METHODS

Based on the results of the preliminary study conducted by the researchers, it was evidenced that speaking anxiety became the instructional problem on the participants of this study. Thus, the researchers employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) method to tackle the instructional problem. Syah (2016) pronounces that this action research approach empowers teachers to address critical issues found in classroom. Classroom Action Research presents a definition of one problem-solving strategy that highlights concrete actions and capacity-building processes in identifying and resolving instructional problems (Sunata, 2019). The procedure of this study included one cycle through four stages, namely planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

The subjects of this research were 42 English Department students in a private university in Malang. The participants were 32 female students and 10 male students in a Basic English-Speaking class. They were selected as the research subjects as they indicated speaking anxiety in the preliminary study. Based on the results of the preliminary study, the researchers proceeded the planning where lesson plan was constructed including the preparation of materials, media, and teaching scenario used in the next stage. In this stage, the researchers also constructed research instruments, namely observation checklist and interview question items. Then, in the acting stage, the researchers collaborated to implement the teaching scenario of using AI-based ChatGPT voice feature in practicing students' speaking. While one researcher acted as the teacher, the others took the role as the observers using the observation checklist. In addition, the researchers also conducted interview with 10 sample students picked out randomly to confirm the results of the

observation. Finally, the researchers reflected on the students' speaking performance, observation results, and interview feedbacks from students. The utilization of this media is considered as successful if the results reached 75%.

FINDINGS

The utilization of ChatGPT voice feature as speaking partner to alleviate students' speaking anxiety was conducted in one-cycle procedure of Classroom Action Research. After obtaining results from preliminary study that speaking anxiety was pronounced to the instruction problem found in classroom setting, the researchers constructed the teaching scenarios using ChatGPT voice feature in a lesson plan in planning stage. In this stage, the researchers also prepared the research instruments, namely observation checklist and interview question items. In the acting stage, it was determined that in the teaching scenario, one researcher acted as the teacher who asked students to practice initiating conversation with ChatGPT voice feature. The students were instructed to maintain conversation using speaking prompts prepared by the teacher. In observing stage, the other researchers took the role as observers who got the task to examine students' speaking performance in terms of fluency, grammar, and self-confidence. The researchers then conducted interview with sample of students to discover additional or supporting data. Finally, the results of students' speaking performance, observation, and interview were analyzed to make some implications of the findings in reflecting stage. Lastly, it was concluded whether or not the criteria of success have been met. The flow of the one-cycle action research is illustrated in the following Figure 1.
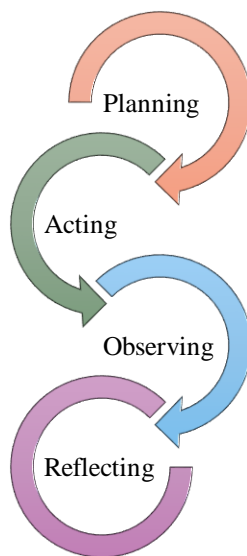

Figure 1. Flow of Classroom Action Research Procedure

The findings of this study revealed that the implementation of ChatGPT voice feature was effective to alleviate students' speaking anxiety. It was reflected from the students' speaking performance which significantly improved from the preliminary study to after the implementation of ChatGPT voice feature which played the role as the AI-based amorphous

speaking partner. The comparison of the students' speaking performance between the two times is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Speaking Performance Before and After Using ChatGPT Voice Feature

Components	Speaking Performance Percentage		
	Before Using ChatGPT	After Using ChatGPT	Description
Fluency	50%	76.19%	Improved
Grammar	42.86%	80.95%	Improved
Confidence	35.71%	85.71%	Improved

Data presented in Table 1 implied that students' speaking performance significantly improved from the preliminary study results to after the implementation of ChatGPT voice feature. In the component of fluency, students' speaking performance escalated from 50% to 76.19%. In the are of grammar usage, students' speaking skill improved from 42.86% to 80.95% which was considered as significant improvement. Moreover, in term of speaking confidence, the results showed another huge leap from 35.71% to 85.71%. The results presented above implied that the use of ChatGPT voice feature was successful to alleviate students' speaking anxiety as it passed the criteria of success determined by the researchers as all improvements were over 75%.

Next, the observation checklists revealed that students were more active and engaged in the speaking activity with ChatGPT voice feature. It was reflected from the success of students in maintaining conversation with ChatGPT longer than when they conversed with their peers. Also, students were observed as focusing on the conversation materials and speaking prompts. In addition, students implied positive facial expressions, gestures, and attitude during the conversation with ChatGPT. The details of the observation results are delivered in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Observation Checklist

Statement	Number of Student	Percentage
Student maintains conversation with ChatGPT more than 5 minutes	35 students	83.33%
Student focuses on the conversation prompts with ChatGPT	33 students	78.57%
Student shows positive facial expression during conversation with ChatGPT	36 students	85.71%
Student shows positive facial expression during conversation with ChatGPT	38 students	90.48%
Student shows positive attitude during conversation with ChatGPT	35 students	83.33%

Students' perceptions regarding the implementation of ChatGPT voice feature to take the role as the amorphous speaking partner were discovered from the results of interview with samples of research participants. The students stated that they were greatly comfortable in maintaining conversation with ChatGPT voice feature compared to when they were required to practice conversation with their peers. The students also implied that conversing with ChatGPT gave them no stress and worry. It included the absence of fear of being judged and evaluated negatively. The responses from ChatGPT were viewed as harmless by the students so that they felt more confidence in conversing with the amorphous speaking partner. They also felt like stress-free from delivering utterances with perfect grammar. Those contributed to the positive facial expression, gestures, and attitude toward utilizing ChatGPT voice feature to become their speaking partner.

DISCUSSION

The synchronization of the findings of this research justifies that this research plays a significant part in proving that the avail of Artificial Intelligence-powered ChatGPT voice feature is effective in alleviating students' speaking anxiety in Indonesian higher education EFL context. The resulted instructional problem in preliminary study was greatly found in many other English teaching and learning context. Therefore, it is important to address the problem and attempt to pose a solution.

The findings of this research appear to be in line with a study conducted by Nuñez, et al. (2025) who discovered that ChatGPT Voice was effective in reducing language anxiety as it created non-judgmental practice scenarios which consequently encouraging the students to be active in the learning process. Similar finding was delivered by Hayashi & Sato (2024) who demonstrated notable reduction of second language anxiety of Japanese university students. In terms of students' perception on the use of ChatGPT, Nugroho et al. (2024) supported the findings of this study as they summarized that the instant and interactive feedbacks from ChatGPT were useful in helping students to gain confidence, upgrade pronunciation, and enhance fluency.

On the other hand, the findings of this research seemed to contradict with the study conducted by Pratiwi et al. (2024) who pointed out how ChatGPT voice feature was inaccurate in assessing pronunciation and lack of contextual nuances. Also, they suggested addressing ChatGPT as supplementary aid instead of a replacement of traditional or conventional teaching methods. In addition, the previous study carried out by Zhai, et al. (2024) underscored the potential decline in interpersonal competences which worsened anxiety in social situations due to the over-reliance on the Artificial Intelligence-based application.

From the discussion referred to the findings of this research, it was a solid proof that AI-based ChatGPT Voice feature was powerful in improving speaking performance and alleviating speaking anxiety. However, the utilization of this technology is suggested to adjust the contexts and in careful and wise manners to extract the utmost advantages and avoid potential problems raised.

Since this study was only limited to the implementation of AI-based ChatGPT Voice feature at one of private university, the finding of this study cannot be used as pivot

resources for this particular issue. Therefore, further researchers are encouraged to conduct similar research that can reach more subjects in order to reveal more powerful results.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research implied the conclusion that the avail of Artificial Intelligence-powered ChatGPT Voice feature was effective in alleviating students' speaking anxiety. It was portrayed in the changes of behaviors and outcomes from before using ChatGPT and after the implementation. The conclusion was also based on the interview results with students regarding the experiences of utilizing ChatGPT voice as their speaking partner. There was significant difference between when they spoke with their peers and ChatGPT application in terms of conversation length, grammar, word choices, and confidence.

The attempt to alleviate students' speaking anxiety was conducted using ChatGPT voice feature which played the role as an amorphous speaking partner can be describe as follows. As the researchers spotted speaking anxiety as the instructional problem based on the results of preliminary study, lesson plan, media, and teaching scenarios were designed in the planning stage. In this stage, the researchers also constructed research instruments, namely observation checklist and interview question items. After the planning stage was completed, the researchers moved to the acting stage where one of them acted as the teacher who required students to use ChatGPT voice feature as speaking partner and the others took the role as the observers. After the implementation of ChatGPT voice feature and the observation, the researchers sought confirmation of the results by conducting interview with students. Finally, the researchers reflected on students' speaking performance, observation results, and interview feedbacks. The findings of this study indicated that the avail of ChatGPT voice feature was effective to alleviate students' speaking anxiety. It was proved that 90,48% of the students were escalated in terms of speaking performance and motivation.

Referring to the high percentage of success in using ChatGPT voice feature as students' amorphous speaking partner, the researchers recommended English teachers to implement the method as an attempt to decrease speaking anxiety. While this study is limited to be conducted in a Basic English-Speaking class in Indonesian context, further research on similar topics is encouraged in wider array of contexts.

However, the potential problem raised from the findings of the study is the comfort area proposed by the use of ChatGPT as speaking partner instead of conversing with real humans. It may lead students to avoid having conversation with humans in long terms. Therefore, it is suggested to manage the use of ChatGPT in assisting learning process in wise manner. It can be used in practicing conversation, but students need to learn how to maintain conversation with real humans.

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