Exploring Malaysian Upper Primary School ESL Learners' Oral Communicative Skills through ChatGPT Voice Chat

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of ChatGPT voice chat in enhancing the oral communicative skills of Malaysian Year 4 pupils within a primary ESL context. Specifically, it examines how the integration of AI-driven voice interaction can support pupils' oral communicative development, including fluency, vocabulary use, and sentence construction. A quantitative research design was adopted to systematically measure the impact of ChatGPT voice chat on pupils' oral communicative performance. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests as well as structured questionnaires. The pre- and post-tests were administered to assess pupils' oral communicative skills before and after the intervention, focusing on fluency, vocabulary usage, and sentence construction. Meanwhile, the questionnaires were used to gather pupils' attitudes, engagement levels, and perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT voice chat in oral communication activities.The intervention involved structured prompt training, where pupils were guided on how to interact effectively with ChatGPT voice chat to elicit meaningful spoken responses. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to determine changes in pupils' oral communicative performance and perceptions following the intervention.The findings indicate that prompt training played a significant role in helping pupils produce more structured and coherent oral communication output. Additionally, the use of ChatGPT voice chat encouraged more active participation, reduced oral communication anxiety, and created a low-pressure environment for practising English. Overall, the results suggest that integrating ChatGPT voice chat into the teaching of oral communicative skills can effectively supplement traditional instructional methods, making language learning more interactive, accessible, and enjoyable for young learners. This study contributes to the growing body of research on educational artificial intelligence, particularly within the domain of second language acquisition at the primary school level.

Keywords: chatgpt voice chat, oral communicative skills, primary esl education, chatgpt prompt, esl

INTRODUCTION

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the foundation of the study and introduces the key elements that guide the research. It begins by outlining the significance of the English language in Malaysia, where English functions as an important second language within the national education system and remains central to academic, professional, and global communication. Historically, English has maintained a strong presence in Malaysian education, and recent reforms have further emphasised communicative competence rather than grammar-focused and rote learning approaches. In line with these reforms, the CEFR-aligned Malaysian Primary School English Language Curriculum places strong emphasis on the development of oral communicative skills, particularly at the upper primary level, such as Year 4, where pupils are expected to engage in meaningful spoken interactions, express opinions and feelings, and respond appropriately in various social contexts (Musa et al., 2021; Thiagarajan & Tan, 2023; Amiruddin et al., 2023). However, despite this curricular emphasis, many pupils continue to struggle with speaking English confidently and fluently. Research consistently attributes these difficulties to limited exposure to authentic speaking opportunities, anxiety related to oral performance, and teaching practices that rely heavily on written exercises and textbook-based drills (Wei, 2023; Nurjanah et al., 2024; Assylzhanova & Sadykova, 2024; Akhmetova et al., 2023).

These ongoing challenges form the basis of the problem statement presented in this section and justify the selection of the research topic. Although communicative language teaching is strongly advocated in policy and curriculum documents, classroom implementation often provides insufficient opportunities for spontaneous and meaningful spoken English practice. Consequently, pupils may acquire vocabulary and grammatical knowledge but remain unable to activate these skills effectively in real-life communication situations (Abildina, 2023; Azarfam, 2022). Traditional pedagogical approaches can further exacerbate these issues by limiting learner participation and reinforcing fear of making mistakes, which negatively affects pupils' willingness to speak English in class (Azarfam, 2022; Fadzli & Ismail, 2023). In response to these limitations, scholars have increasingly highlighted the potential of digital and artificial intelligence (AI) tools to create more interactive, learner-centred environments that support oral communication development (Gligorea et al., 2023; Leddy & Creanor, 2024).

Accordingly, this section outlines the purpose of the study, which is to examine the effectiveness of using ChatGPT's voice chat feature combined with guided prompt training to enhance the communicative speaking skills of Year 4 pupils in English. Previous studies suggest that AI-assisted language learning environments can provide personalised feedback, simulated conversational experiences, and low-anxiety spaces for practice, thereby encouraging greater participation and confidence among learners (Blanco et al., 2024; Pikhart et al., 2024; Zou et al., 2023). Furthermore, teaching pupils how to construct effective prompts when interacting with AI tools has been shown to support both language development and digital literacy, skills that are increasingly relevant in contemporary educational contexts (Biagini, 2024; Faruqe et al., 2022). Guided by this purpose, the research objectives and research questions are clearly presented to ensure alignment between the identified problem and the intended outcomes of the study. A research hypothesis is also formulated to enable systematic examination of the impact of the proposed intervention on pupils' oral communicative performance.

This section further introduces the conceptual framework of the study, which illustrates the relationship between the independent variables, namely the use of ChatGPT's voice chat feature and guided prompt training, and the dependent variable, pupils' communicative speaking skills. This framework is grounded in the principles of communicative language teaching and aligns with the objectives of the CEFR-aligned curriculum. The significance of the study is also discussed in detail, highlighting its potential contributions to multiple stakeholders. For pupils, the study offers opportunities to enhance speaking confidence, fluency, and engagement through innovative learning tools. For teachers, it provides pedagogical insights into integrating AI-driven technologies into English language instruction. From an academic perspective, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on AI-assisted language learning in primary education, particularly within the Malaysian ESL context (Rajendran & Yunus, 2021; Ying & Lin, 2023; Liu et al., 2024).

In acknowledging the scope of the research, this section also outlines the limitations of the study, including constraints related to sample size, research design, and contextual factors, which are essential for ensuring a balanced interpretation of the findings. To enhance clarity and consistency, key terms used throughout the study are operationally defined. The section concludes with a summary that consolidates the main points discussed and reinforces the overall direction of the research, thereby establishing a clear foundation for the subsequent section of the study. Therefore, the research questions for this research are:

a) How does the use of ChatGPT voice chat affect the communicative speaking skills of Year 4 pupils?

b) How does prompt training influence the quality of pupils' spoken interactions with ChatGPT?

c) What are Year 4 pupils' levels of engagement and perceptions towards using ChatGPT voice chat for English speaking practice?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature discusses existing literature related to the development of oral communicative skills among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, with particular emphasis on the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and technology-based learning tools. The discussion is grounded in key theoretical foundations, including Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and Krashen's Input

and Affective Filter Hypotheses, which collectively emphasise meaningful interaction, social mediation, and affective factors in language acquisition. Recent studies on AI-driven platforms, particularly voice-based applications such as ChatGPT, are reviewed to examine their impact on fluency, vocabulary development, sentence construction, learner confidence, and speaking anxiety. The literature also identifies gaps in current research, especially within primary ESL contexts, thereby establishing the need for the present study.

Oral communicative skills is a productive language skill essential for effective human interaction in ESL education, helping learners to communicate effectively and adapt to real-life situations.(Subba Dewan & Sharma, 2025**)** These skills encompass not only speaking and listening but also interpersonal abilities such as turn-taking, empathy, and appropriate use of language across contexts. Prior research highlights the importance of oral communication for academic success, employability, and personal well-being. For instance, Owusu-Ansah and Anane (2024) report that students increasingly recognise communication skills as essential for teamwork and professional presentations, while Iranfard et al. (2021) demonstrate a positive relationship between communication skills and life satisfaction. Similarly, Khodaei et al. (2021) and Wang (2024) emphasise the role of oral communication in social interaction, intercultural competence, and professional readiness, underscoring its relevance across disciplines (Schmidt-Wilk, 2021; Duvvuri, 2024).

The model of communicative competence proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) provides a foundational framework for understanding oral communication. The model comprises grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence, all of which are essential for effective spoken interaction. Grammatical competence involves knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure, sociolinguistic competence concerns appropriate language use in different social contexts, discourse competence relates to coherence and cohesion in extended speech, and strategic competence enables learners to manage communication breakdowns through compensatory strategies. This model remains highly relevant for ESL instruction and speaking-focused pedagogies.

Past studies on oral communicative skills reveal persistent challenges faced by ESL learners, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, speaking anxiety, low confidence, and inadequate opportunities for authentic interaction (Peter et al., 2023; Kashinathan & Aziz, 2021). To address these challenges, researchers have advocated for the integration of technology and innovative pedagogical approaches. Studies demonstrate that digital tools such as ChatGPT, video conferencing platforms, and social media can enhance learner engagement, motivation, and speaking practice (Muniandy & Selvanathan, 2024; Ibrahim & Hashim, 2021; Manogaran & Sulaiman, 2022). Additionally, metacognitive strategies and strategic competence development have been shown to support learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their speaking performance (Dayag-Tungpalan, 2023; Zhang et al., 2021; Bango et al., 2023).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) represents a learner-centred approach that prioritises interaction and meaningful communication over rote learning and grammatical accuracy. Empirical evidence indicates that CLT enhances oral proficiency by fostering authentic language use and learner engagement (Hui & Yunus, 2023; Shahid et al., 2023). The integration of technology within CLT frameworks has further strengthened its effectiveness, particularly in online and blended learning environments (Li & Sun, 2023; Cheung, 2021). Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as an extension of CLT, has been widely recognised for its role in promoting fluency, confidence, and real-world language application (Fatima et al., 2021; Cheng et al., 2024; Alshahrani & Saud, 2024).

Technology-based learning has emerged as a significant catalyst for enhancing oral communicative skills. Research on chatbots, AI systems, virtual reality, and blended learning environments indicates positive effects on language proficiency, self-regulation, and learner motivation (Bahari et al., 2024; Deng & Yu, 2023; Ramalingam et al., 2022; Raman et al., 2023). However, challenges related to teacher readiness, digital literacy, and institutional support remain prevalent (Choi & Chung, 2021; Garib, 2022; Preis et al., 2023; Nguyen & Habók, 2021). These findings suggest that effective implementation of technology requires both pedagogical and technical preparedness.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory further supports the integration of collaborative and technology-enhanced learning. Learning is viewed as a socially mediated process occurring within the Zone of Proximal Development

(ZPD), where scaffolding and interaction play central roles (Siregar et al., 2024; Nurhasnah et al., 2024). Recent studies highlight the compatibility of socio-constructivist principles with digital tools such as augmented reality and collaborative platforms, which promote engagement, dialogue, and shared meaning-making (Hsu & Liu, 2023; Muliyani et al., 2023; Mishra, 2023; Preis et al., 2021).

Krashen's Input and Affective Filter Hypotheses also provide a strong theoretical basis for AI-assisted language learning. The Input Hypothesis emphasises exposure to comprehensible input at an appropriate level (i+1), while the Affective Filter Hypothesis highlights the influence of emotional factors such as anxiety and motivation on language acquisition (Zhang et al., 2025; Yaoqing, 2021). Studies demonstrate that AI-driven platforms like ChatGPT can deliver adaptive, comprehensible input and create low-anxiety environments that encourage participation and confidence (Li et al., 2023; Liu, 2021; Prodanovska-Poposka & Todorova, 2023; Alkhalaf, 2022).

In conclusion, the literature affirms that oral communicative skill development is best supported through interactive, learner-centred approaches grounded in CLT, sociocultural theory, and input-based frameworks. The integration of AI and technology-based tools offers significant potential to enhance speaking proficiency, particularly when aligned with sound pedagogical principles. However, gaps remain in research at the primary ESL level, reinforcing the need for further empirical investigation into AI-assisted oral communication instruction.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology begins by describing the research design, followed by a detailed explanation of the participants, instruments, procedures, and data analysis methods. This study adopts a quantitative approach to examine measurable changes in learners' speaking abilities before and after engaging with AI-powered voice chat. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests and structured questionnaires. This section also discusses the ethical considerations and validity strategies implemented to ensure the integrity and reliability of the study. The chosen methodology is aligned with the study's aim to provide empirical evidence on the potential of AI-assisted tools to support oral language development in a primary ESL context.

Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative research design to evaluate how effectively ChatGPT voice chat enhances the oral communicative skills of Year 4 ESL pupils in Malaysia. The research utilized a one-group pre-test and post-test framework, which allowed for quantifiable comparisons of speaking performance before and after the intervention. This design aligns with quantitative methods emphasizing systematic and objective data collection and analysis (Muniandy & Selvanathan, 2024; Robert & Meenakshi 2022). By employing pre- and post-tests, this approach assessed improvements in fluency, vocabulary usage, and sentence structure, while structured questionnaires evaluated pupils' perceptions of confidence, anxiety, and engagement during the learning process (Rajendran & Yunus 2021; Ibrahim & Hashim 2021).

Quantitative research design is beneficial in educational contexts, particularly in language learning, where measurable outcomes can inform teaching strategies. The employment of structured tests provides concrete evidence of speaking skills development over time, reinforcing the findings of Muniandy and Selvanathan (2024), who highlighted the role of technologies like ChatGPT in facilitating ESL learning through interactive and engaging methods. Such technologies not only foster improvements in specific language skills but also enhance the overall communicative abilities of learners, as confirmed by the systematic review conducted by Xu and Hashim (2023). Their findings on digital storytelling indicate that interactive tools can significantly enhance speaking abilities, which is relevant as ChatGPT offers a similar interactive learning environment.

In addition to the pre- and post-testing, this study included structured questionnaires to gather qualitative insights from pupils regarding their learning experiences. This aspect is crucial as it informs educators about learners' emotional and cognitive dimensions while acquiring language skills. Fatima et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of task-based language instruction in enhancing oral communication skills, stating that interactive activities increase students' communication capabilities. Furthermore, the findings of Kana and Hashim (2023)

concerning frequently used language learning strategies align well with the aim of the current study to enhance speaking skills using innovative tools, suggesting that integrating technology fosters varied learning strategies.

The focus on tapping into students' perceptions of anxiety and confidence when speaking reinforces the likelihood that such interventions, like ChatGPT, can mitigate these common challenges. Grieve et al. (2021) investigate students' fears concerning oral presentations and public speaking, affirming that interventions aimed at building these skills contribute positively to learner confidence. Additionally, Le Le (2024) addresses factors contributing to English speaking anxiety and advocates for innovative pedagogical approaches, which supports the desire of this study to incorporate modern technology that can potentially alleviate speaking anxiety while simultaneously enhancing verbal communication skills.

Population of the Study

The population of this study consists of 32 Year 4 ESL pupils in Malaysian primary schools, specifically those enrolled in national schools under the Ministry of Education (MOE). This group was chosen due to their developmental stage in language acquisition, where oral communicative competence is a key focus of the English curriculum. Year 4 pupils typically possess foundational English skills, making them suitable participants for interventions aimed at enhancing speaking fluency, vocabulary, and confidence.

The selection of this population is also aligned with the Primary School Standard Curriculum (KSSR), which emphasizes communicative competence and learner-centered approaches in English language teaching. Furthermore, this study responds to the growing need for innovative strategies to support spoken English skills at the upper primary level, where learners often experience limited opportunities for authentic oral interaction, particularly in rural or mixed-proficiency classrooms.

By focusing on this specific population, the study aims to generate relevant and practical insights into the effectiveness of AI-powered voice chat tools like ChatGPT in supporting oral language development among young ESL learners in the Malaysian context.

Research Instrument

This study utilised two main research instruments: pre- and post-tests and a structured questionnaire. These instruments were designed to gather quantitative data on pupils' oral communicative performance and their perceptions of using ChatGPT voice chat as a learning tool.

Pre-Test and Post-Test

The pre- and post-tests were developed to assess learners' oral communicative skills, focusing on three key areas: fluency, vocabulary use, and sentence construction. The speaking tasks were aligned with the Year 4 English language syllabus and evaluated using an analytic rubric adapted from the Canale and Swain's Communicative Competence Model (1980). The same rubric was used for both the pre-test and post-test to ensure consistency in measurement and enable comparison of pupils' performance before and after the intervention. Scores were analysed quantitatively to determine whether any significant improvements occurred following the use of ChatGPT voice chat and prompt training. The rubric is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Oral Communicative Skills Rubric

Component	Definition (Simplified)	5 – Excellent	4 – Good	3 – Satisfactory	1-2 – Developing/Emerging
Grammatical Competence	Uses correct sentence structures and vocabulary	Consistently accurate sentences and vocabulary usage	Mostly accurate with minor errors	Some accuracy but frequent minor errors	Limited control; frequent major errors

Sociolinguistic Competence	Speaks appropriately in different situations	Uses appropriate expressions fluently (e.g., greetings, thanks)	Generally appropriate but may miss some social cues	Sometimes inappropriate or forced expressions	Rarely uses context-appropriate language
Discourse Competence	Organizes ideas clearly and maintains topic flow	Ideas are coherent, well-linked, and on-topic	Mostly clear; occasional disjointed thoughts	Somewhat organized but lacks clarity	Ideas are unconnected and hard to follow
Strategic Competence	Maintains communication even when unsure	Effectively uses strategies (e.g., fillers, clarification)	Uses some strategies with support	Rarely uses strategies; may stop speaking	Does not attempt to manage communication breakdowns

Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire was administered after the intervention to gather pupils' perceptions of their experience using ChatGPT voice chat. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items designed to assess learners' confidence, anxiety levels, engagement, and overall attitude toward AI-assisted oral practice. The items were adapted from established language learning attitude scales and simplified for age-appropriateness. The questionnaire provided supporting data to help interpret the test results and offered insight into the affective impact of the intervention. The breakdown of each section in the questionnaire is further explained below.

Section A: Communicative Skill Confidence

Purpose: To explore the pupils' self-perceived improvements in speaking skills, addressing RQ1.

Section B: Prompt Training Awareness & Use

Purpose: To assess pupils' understanding and use of prompts when interacting with ChatGPT, addressing RQ2.

Section C: Engagement and Motivation

Purpose: To evaluate pupils' levels of interest and emotional response, addressing RQ3.

Section D: Perceived Usefulness and Feedback

Purpose: To determine how pupils view the helpfulness and feedback quality of ChatGPT.

Together, these instruments provided a comprehensive view of both the linguistic and emotional outcomes of integrating AI-powered voice chat into ESL speaking activities.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study were analysed using quantitative methods to determine the effectiveness of ChatGPT voice chat and prompt training in improving pupils' oral communicative skills. The analysis focused on two key data sources: pre- and post-test scores and questionnaire responses.

Pre- and Post-Test Analysis

The pre- and post-tests were scored using a structured analytic rubric assessing fluency, vocabulary use, and sentence construction. Each component was rated numerically, and total scores were computed for each

participant. The differences between pre-test and post-test scores were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) to observe trends in improvement. In addition, inferential statistics such as paired sample t-tests were used to determine whether the differences in scores were statistically significant, providing evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention.

Questionnaire Analysis

Responses from the structured Likert-scale questionnaire were also analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. This analysis helped to identify pupils' perceptions, engagement levels, confidence, and anxiety related to using ChatGPT for oral communication practice. The results were used to support and triangulate the findings from the speaking performance data.

All data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to ensure accuracy and reliability in data processing. The combination of performance-based and perception-based data provided a comprehensive understanding of the impact of AI-powered voice chat on learners' oral communication skills.

FINDINGS

Effects of ChatGPT Voice Chat on Communicative Speaking Skills

Findings revealed an overall improvement in pupils' speaking performance following the intervention.

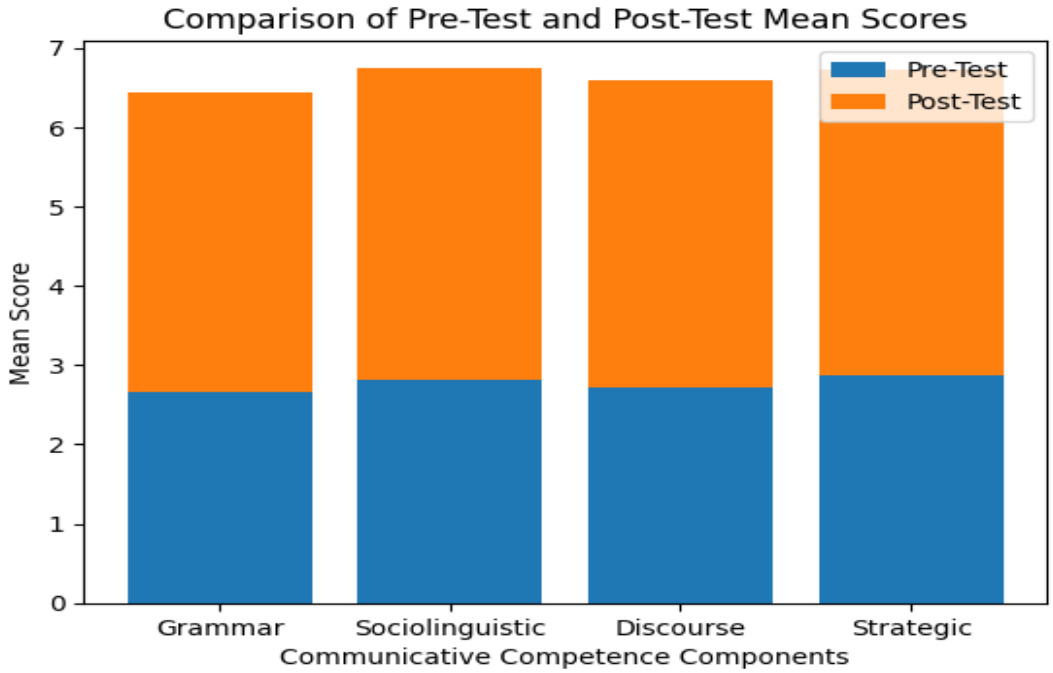

Figure 1: Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores Across Communicative Competence Components

Grammatical competence improved from a pre-test mean of 2.66 to a post-test mean of 3.78. Sociolinguistic competence increased from 2.81 to 3.94, while discourse competence recorded the highest gain, increasing from 2.72 to 3.88. Strategic competence also showed notable improvement, rising from 2.88 in the pre-test to 3.84 in the post-test. These results suggest positive development in pupils' ability to construct sentences, use appropriate expressions, organise ideas coherently, and manage communication breakdowns.

Paired-sample t-test analyses were conducted to determine whether the observed improvements were statistically significant. The results indicated statistically significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores for all four components of communicative competence ($p < .001$). These findings provide quantitative evidence that the use of ChatGPT voice chat had a positive effect on pupils' communicative speaking skills.

Influence of Prompt Training on Spoken Interaction Quality

Section A in the questionnaire examined pupils' self-perceived confidence in speaking English after using ChatGPT voice chat. The responses indicated a high mean score of 4.21, suggesting that most pupils felt more confident speaking English and were less afraid of making mistakes. This supports the speaking assessment results, indicating that increased confidence may have contributed to improved oral performance.

Section B in the questionnaire focused on pupils' awareness and use of prompts when interacting with ChatGPT. The mean score for this section is 4.05. This reflects pupils' ability to ask clearer questions, modify prompts when misunderstandings occurred, and provide more detailed instructions. This finding suggest that prompt training played an important role in improving the quality of spoken interactions.

Pupils' Engagement and Perceptions of ChatGPT Voice Chat

Section C assessed pupils' levels of engagement and motivation.

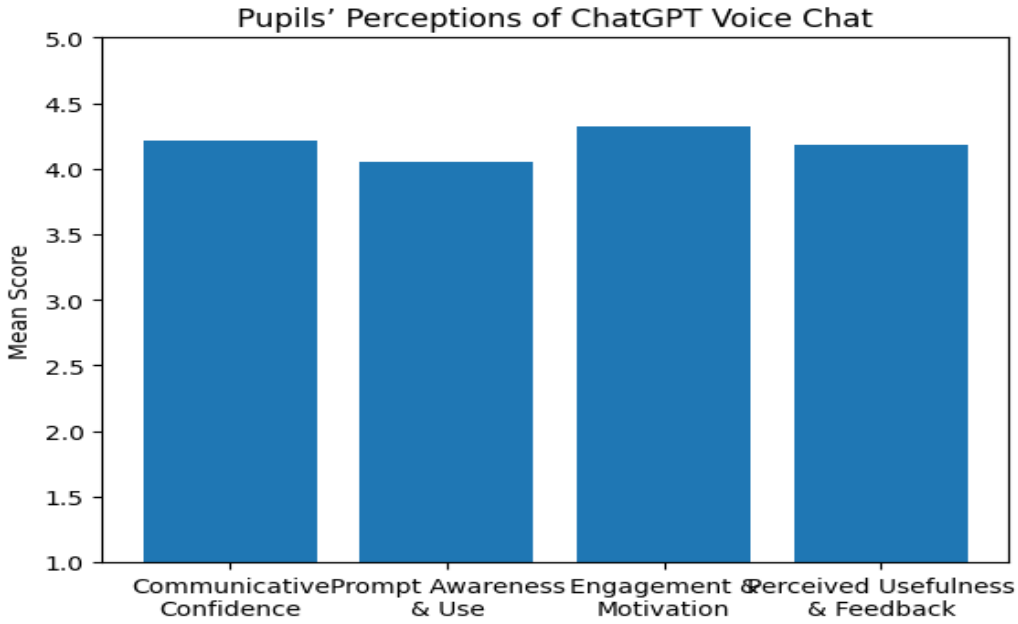

Figure 2: Mean Scores of Pupils' Perceptions Across Questionnaire Sections

This section recorded the highest mean score among all sections which is 4.32. This indicates that pupils found the ChatGPT voice chat activities enjoyable and engaging. High engagement levels suggest that the AI-assisted activities created a positive learning environment that encouraged pupils to participate actively in speaking practice.

Section D examined pupils' perceptions of the usefulness and feedback provided by ChatGPT. The mean score for this section is 4.18, indicating that pupils perceived ChatGPT as helpful in correcting their English, supporting continued speech, and providing useful feedback. These perceptions help explain the observed improvements in grammatical and strategic competence in the speaking assessment.

These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of ChatGPT voice chat on pupils' speaking development. The statistically significant improvements in communicative competence (RQ1) were supported by pupils' reported ability to use prompts effectively (RQ2) and their high levels of engagement, confidence, and perceived usefulness of the tool (RQ3). This triangulation of data strengthens the overall findings of the study. In summary, this section has presented the findings related to all three research questions. The results indicate that ChatGPT voice chat positively affected Year 4 pupils' communicative speaking skills, that prompt training enhanced the quality of spoken interactions, and that pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement and positive perceptions toward AI-assisted speaking practice.

DISCUSSION

Effects of ChatGPT Voice Chat on Communicative Speaking Skills

The findings from the pre-test and post-test speaking assessment indicate that the use of ChatGPT voice chat positively affected Year 4 pupils' communicative speaking skills. Statistically significant improvements were observed across grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence.

The largest gains were observed in discourse and sociolinguistic competence, suggesting that pupils became more capable of organising ideas, sustaining interaction, and responding appropriately in conversational contexts. The conversational design of ChatGPT voice chat encouraged extended responses and reduced pupils' dependence on short, memorised utterances. These findings are consistent with recent studies reporting improvements in oral fluency and interactional competence through AI-supported speaking practice (Kohnke, Zou, & Zhang, 2023; Lee, 2023).

Improvements in grammatical and strategic competence further suggest that repeated exposure to comprehensible input and a low-anxiety environment supported pupils' willingness to take linguistic risks and manage communication breakdowns more effectively. These improvements align with Canale and Swain's (1980) communicative competence framework, which emphasises the integration of multiple competence components in effective communication.

Influence of Prompt Training on Spoken Interaction Quality

The findings related to Research Question 2 highlight the role of prompt training in improving the quality of pupils' spoken interactions with ChatGPT. Questionnaire responses indicated that pupils developed awareness of how to ask clearer questions, adjust prompts, and guide interaction when misunderstandings occurred.

This increased prompt awareness supported improved discourse organisation and strategic competence, as pupils were better able to sustain interaction and obtain relevant responses. Prompt training therefore functioned as a form of scaffolding that enhanced pupils' control over AI-mediated interaction. Similar findings have been reported in recent studies, which note that explicit instruction on interacting with AI enhances learning outcomes and interaction quality (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Pupils' Engagement and Perceptions of ChatGPT Voice Chat

Questionnaire findings revealed high levels of engagement and positive perceptions towards ChatGPT voice chat. Pupils reported increased confidence, enjoyment, and perceived usefulness of the tool for English speaking practice.

High engagement levels are particularly significant in ESL speaking contexts, where anxiety and fear of making mistakes often inhibit oral participation. Recent research has highlighted the role of AI tools in fostering learner confidence by providing non-judgemental and adaptive feedback (Lee & Kim, 2024). The supportive and non-judgemental nature of ChatGPT voice chat appeared to reduce these affective barriers, contributing to greater participation and practice.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine how the integration of ChatGPT voice chat could support English speaking development among primary ESL learners. Using a pre-test and post-test speaking assessment and a post-intervention questionnaire, the study addressed three research questions focusing on communicative speaking skills, prompt training, and learner engagement. The findings from the speaking assessment revealed statistically significant improvements across all four components of communicative competence, namely grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. These results indicate that ChatGPT voice chat provided pupils with meaningful opportunities for oral practice, enabling them to produce more coherent, confident, and sustained spoken responses. In addition, the questionnaire findings demonstrated that pupils developed greater awareness of how to use prompts effectively when interacting with ChatGPT. Prompt training was found to play an important role in improving the quality of spoken interaction, allowing pupils to guide

conversations, clarify meaning, and manage communication breakdowns more effectively. Furthermore, pupils reported high levels of engagement, confidence, and positive perceptions towards using ChatGPT voice chat for English speaking practice. These affective outcomes helped explain the observed improvements in speaking performance, highlighting the importance of motivation and reduced anxiety in oral language development. The findings also suggest several implications for ESL teaching practice. First, ChatGPT voice chat can be used as a supplementary tool to provide pupils with additional speaking opportunities, particularly in mixed-ability classrooms where individual oral practice time is limited. Second, teachers should incorporate prompt training into AI-assisted activities to ensure that pupils can engage meaningfully and effectively with the technology. Additionally, the positive affective responses reported by pupils indicate that AI-assisted speaking activities may help reduce speaking anxiety and increase learner confidence. Teachers may therefore consider integrating AI tools as part of a supportive and low-stakes speaking environment rather than as a replacement for traditional instruction.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that ChatGPT voice chat has considerable potential as a supportive tool for enhancing communicative speaking skills among Year 4 ESL pupils. When implemented thoughtfully and supported by prompt training, AI-powered voice chat can foster both linguistic development and positive learner engagement. The findings underscore the importance of integrating emerging technologies in ways that complement pedagogical goals and support meaningful language learning experiences.

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