

## Exploring the Effectiveness of AI Tools in Enhancing English Communicative Competence among Moroccan Students of the Department of Economics

Meryem Aherrahrou

Moulay Ismail University, Morocco

### Abstract

*English proficiency has become mandatory for current Moroccan English as Foreign Language (EFL) graduates to obtain their Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. degrees. Latest research studies on the field of education showed that, despite the great efforts made by their language educators, it was found that a significant number of Moroccan university students from different departments still find it hard to communicate effectively in English in some national and international professional settings. Given this concern, this work aimed to investigate the effectiveness of Artificial Intelligent (AI) tools –as a learning tool- in enhancing communicative competence among n=78 EFL third-year Economics students from Moulay Ismail university. To achieve this goal, a mixed method research design was used to collect the data. Obtained results on the integration of AI in English language communication indicated a positive significant improvement not only in developing students' pronunciation, self-confidence, learning motivation, learners' autonomy, communication skills, but also in reducing communication anxiety among the participants of this study. The findings suggested that the incorporation of AI models could be effective in developing the communicative competence of Moroccan English as foreign language learners.*

**Keywords:** AI, effectiveness, communicative competence, EFL students, Department of Economics.

### Introduction

English proficiency has emerged as an academic necessity for Moroccan undergraduate students from different departments to obtain their Bachelor degree. It was found that despite the great efforts made, without doubt by their language educators, a significant number of them, namely from non-English departments still find it hard to communicate effectively in English due to the limited speaking fluency practice opportunities. AI tools has been proven as an effective remedy for enhancing speaking proficiency of EFL students [1]. It creates a safe and non-critical space where learners can practice without fear of being judged or embarrassed [2]. It encourages continuous learning [3]. It reduces communication anxiety [4]; [ 5]; [ 6]. It builds confidence in academic and professional communication [7]. It improves the pronunciation, intonation, fluency, vocabulary and grammar [8]; [9]. It increases students' engagement, learning motivation and self-confidence [10]. Given this concern, this research specifically was designed to explore the effectiveness of AI tools such as Chat GPT in enhancing English communicative competence among Moroccan Economics undergraduate students of Moulay Ismail University.

### Review of Literature

#### 1. Chat GPT in English Language Communication

Chat GPT's role in developing and enhancing the language proficiency level of EFL learners has been studied extensively by numerous researchers around the globe. For this review, we have selected the most recent and relevant studies to provide a comprehensive overview. In a very recent research study, [8] examined the effect of Artificial Intelligence mediated speaking assessment on developing the speaking performance of intermediate Iraqi EFL learners. Obtained findings from their study demonstrate a significant enhancement in vocabulary, grammar, intonation, pronunciation and fluency of the experimental group. Within the same context, [5] explored the role of Chat GPT as a virtual speaking tutor in boosting speaking self-efficacy of n=44 Iraqi students in an Advanced English classes in Erbil. Their results reported that the use of Chat GPT reduced speaking anxiety, and enhanced speaking self-efficacy of Iraqi students. In another study, [9] investigated the impact of AI platforms on developing speaking skills of n=340 Jordanian female students at some private



Semi-structured interviews were used to gain more insights into the impact of Chat GPT activities on developing communicative competence among Moroccan Economics undergraduate students. The interview was conducted voluntarily with  $n=7$  of the participants of this research. The interviews were conducted in Arabic to create a comfortable environment for the participants to encourage them to provide us with more details about their experience as users of the Chat GPT to improve their speaking skills. Two questions were addressed to those volunteers: 1) What are your thoughts regarding using Chat GPT to enhance your English-speaking skills? 2) To what extent do you believe the Chat GPT activities have improved your vocabulary, self-confidence, learning motivation, pronunciation, grammar, fluency, learning engagement and reduce your anxiety? The duration of each interview lasted from 10 to 15 minutes.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to calculate the collected data. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the obtained results from research question 1, paired sample t-test was used to answer research question 2. Whereas, research question 3 was analysed qualitatively.

#### Results and discussion

### 1. Results

#### 1.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

##### 1.1.1 Analysis of Research Question 1

**RQ1:** What are the current AI technologies used among the participants to improve their English communication skills?

The first research question aimed to find out the most AI tool used among the participants of this work to improve their English communication skills. The results showed that a big number of the participants  $n=39$  tend to use Chat GPT to help them with their English presentations.  $n=26$  out of 78 of the participants of this research tend to use Google Translate to come up with appropriate words for their presentations. However,  $n=9$  of the participants confirmed that while preparing their English presentations they tend to rely on themselves. Figure 1 displays the percentages of the most AI tools used for improving the speaking skills among Moroccan Economics students.

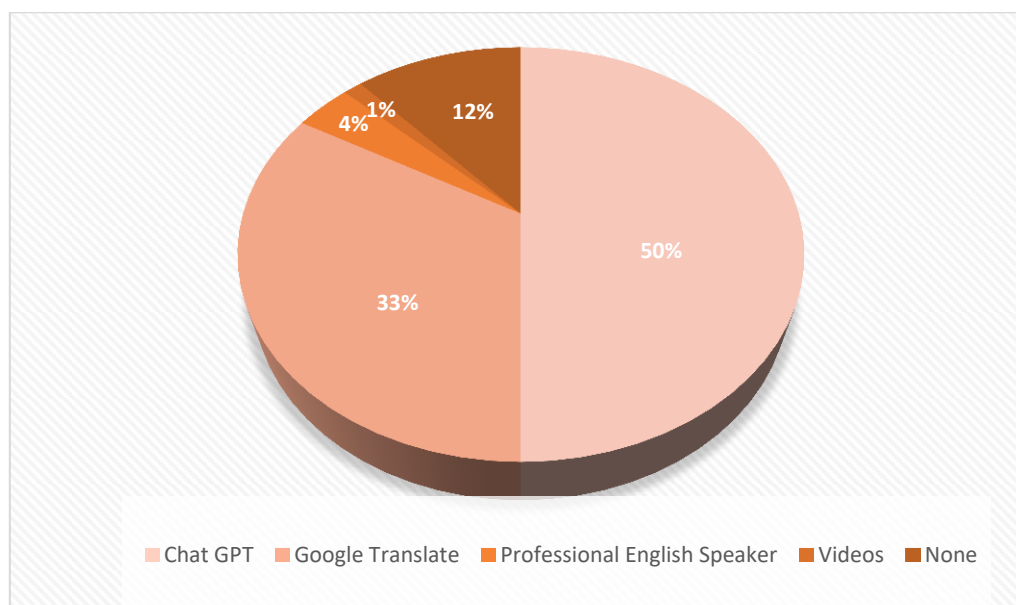


Fig. 1. Distributions of AI technologies among Moroccan Economics students

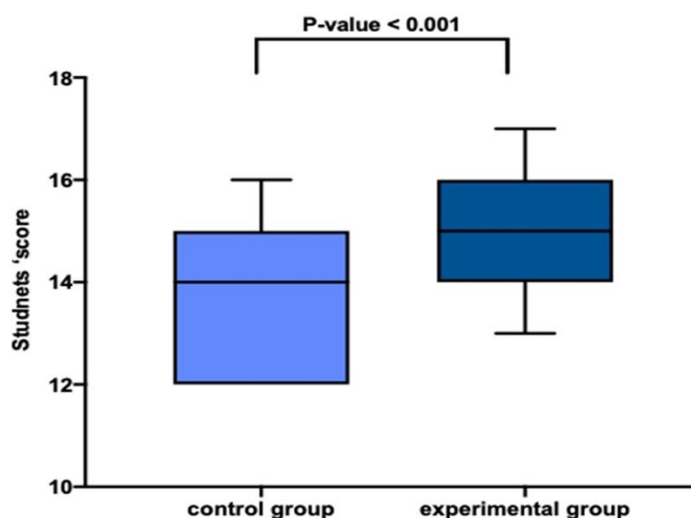
##### 1.1.2 Analysis of Research Question 2

### RQ 3: Does Chat GPT positively affect participants' speaking scores?

The main goal of the second research question was to explore the impact of Chat GPT in enhancing the speaking scores of the participants of this work. Obtained results showed that the scores of the experimental group outperformed the scores of the control group. The experimental group has higher mean scores (MD= 15,21, SD= 1,25) in all speaking skills standards, namely, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency and grammar compared to the control group (MD=13,76, SD= 1,38). This consistency in improving all speaking skills standards implies the effectiveness of Chat GPT as a learning tool in enhancing the English communication abilities among Moroccan Economics students.

**Table 1.** Speaking scores for the control and experimental groups

Samples	Number of the participants	Mean Difference (MD)	Standards Deviation (SD)	Paired T-test
Control group	n= 39	13,76	1,38	<b>P&lt;0.001</b>
Experimental group	n= 39	15,21	1,25	



**Fig. 2.** Paired T-test for the control and experimental groups

### 1.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

### 2. Analysis of Research Question 3

**RQ 2:** How does regular interaction with Chat GPT influence speaking anxiety, self-confidence, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation among Moroccan undergraduate students of the Department of Economics of Moulay Ismail university?

The third research question aimed to explore the effectiveness of Chat GPT in enhancing self-confidence, language proficiency, learners' autonomy and learning motivation among the participants of this study. The data analysis of the interviews resulted in three significant themes:

#### 1. Chat GPT enhances Self-confidence

The analysis of the interview data indicated that most of the participants of this work reported that their ability to communicate confidently in the English language positively improved after they had practiced with Chat GPT. They reported that the daily interaction with Chat GPT made them more comfortable and relaxed without any fear to be judged. They also claimed that they did not experience any anxiety regarding making pronunciation mistakes:



