



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

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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



universities. The findings proved the effectiveness of AI in improving the pronunciation, intonation, fluency, vocabulary and grammar of the experimental group. [4] aimed to find out how AI-powered language learning tools can help Pakistani $n=340$ learners from different departments to overcome spoken difficulties, pronunciation struggle, and limitations of vocabulary. Data analysis obtained from their open-ended questionnaire indicate positive impact of AI in enhancing speaking confidence and reducing communication anxiety of the participants. Similarly, [11] investigated the potential influence of Chat GPT in enhancing students' communication proficiency among $n=68$ Chinese undergraduate students from the Wuhan University of Engineering Science. The results of the experimental group revealed that the use of Chat GPT contribute to the development of students' English communication abilities. [10] explored the effectiveness of Chat GPT in facilitating English language learning among $n=120$ Thai first year pre-service teachers in Bangkok. Obtained results demonstrate the effectiveness of AI in increasing students' engagement, learning motivation and self-confidence of the participants. In the same vain, [12] assessed the effectiveness of Chat GPT in enhancing language proficiency among $n=45$ Slovakian third-year students. Their findings showed that learners who wisely use Chat GPT demonstrate enhancement in vocabulary acquisition and sentence structure. [13] examined the impact of AI tools on the speaking competencies of $n=28$ upper-intermediate EFL learners at an Ethiopian university. The results revealed positive improvement in speaking proficiency of the participants at all levels. [14] explored the effect of Chat GPT on the speaking self-efficacy level of EFL $n=65$ Turkish students from different departments. The results indicated that engaging with Chat GPT facilitated learners in developing confidence in their conversational skills, and managing their stress levels. [6] evaluated the effect of AI chatbots in improving EFL speaking skills among $n=85$ Taiwanese students. The study proved the effectiveness of AI in reducing speaking anxiety, boosting confidence and fostering rapport building. The studies mentioned above display limited evidence exist regarding the extent to which Chat GPT enhances Economics students' English communication skills in the context of Morocco. This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the current AI technologies used among Moroccan undergraduate Economics students of Moulay Ismail university to improve their English communication skills?

RQ 2: Does Chat GPT positively affect participants' speaking scores?

RQ3: How does regular interaction with Chat GPT influence speaking anxiety, self-confidence, fluency, autonomy and learning motivation among the participants of this work?

Methodology of Research

1. Research Design

To explore the effect of Chat GPT in enhancing communicative competencies among the participants of this work, a mixed method approach was used. Data collection and analysis were done using quantitative and qualitative methods.

2. Participants

The research study involved $n=78$ third year students studying English as a Foreign Language as a part of their curriculum. They were all enrolled at the Department of Economics of Moulay Ismail University during the academic year 2024-2025. There was $n=40$ females and $n=38$ males. The average age of these students was twenty-two years old. Their level of proficiency varies between beginner and intermediate. The participants were divided into two groups: control group $n=39$ students and the experimental group $n=39$ students, which used the application of Chat GPT. Both groups were taught by the same instructor using the same materials.

3. Research Instruments

3.1 Speaking Assessment Exam

Oral presentation assessment exam was used to measure the impact of Chat GPT in developing communication abilities achieved by of the participants of this study. All the participants were asked to deliver their presentations in 10 minutes including inviting and answering questions.

3.2 Semi-structured Interview



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.

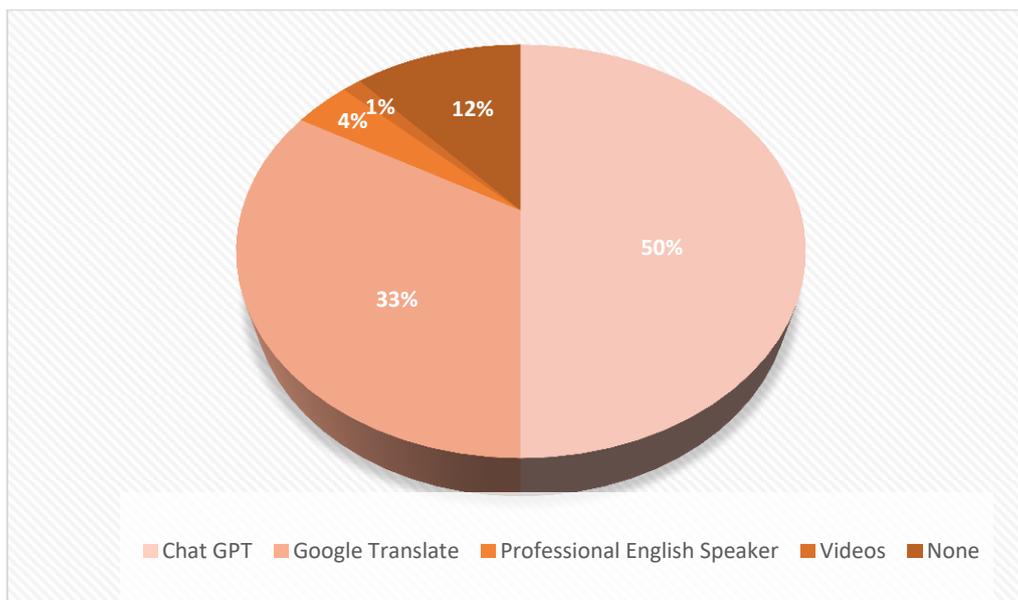


Fig. 1. Distributions of AI technologies among Moroccan Economics students

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	P<0.001
Experimental group	n= 39	15,21	1,25	

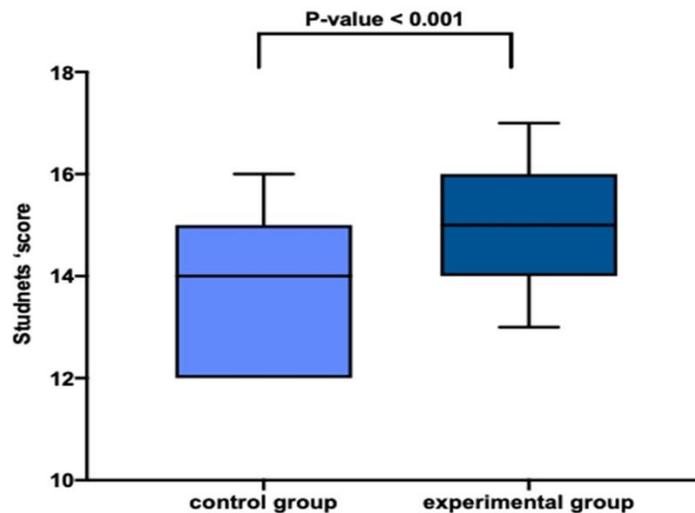


Fig. 2. Paired T-test for the control and experimental groups

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:



“I prefer not to speak in English in speaking class because of the fear being laugh at by my friends. If I say something wrong, they will laugh at me. But when I speak with Chat GPT, I don't have such fears or worries at all. I can say whatever I want without any fear or criticism.”

Furthermore, the participants indicated that the immediate feedback they receive from Chat GPT helped them increase their confidence in their speaking abilities:

“Thanks to Chat GPT I became able to discuss different topics, if I made a mistake Chat GPT will correct it to me instantly. I think my confidence in communicating in English has improved.”

2. Chat GPT fosters the language proficiency

Data analysis regarding participants interaction with Chat GPT revealed an improvement in their language proficiency, vocabulary development, sentence structure and fluency. Participants reported that by providing timely and specific input by Chat GPT helped students to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. The immediate feedback enabled the participants to correct their mistakes, reinforce their understanding, and develop more effective learning habits:

“One of the best things about Chat GPT is that whenever I made some grammatical mistakes. Chat GPT corrects my mistakes, for instance, if I used past instead of the present tense. Chat GPT corrected it for me... sometimes, I cannot find appropriate words for my talk. But talking with Chat GPT, I can ask for the words I need. This tool helped me a lot to expand my vocabulary”

3. Chat GPT increases learning motivation

Findings revealed that the application of Chat GPT not only boosted participants' motivation to improve their English-speaking skills, but also facilitated the development of EFL learners' autonomy, allowing students to take ownership of their learning process and actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions and dialogue. The participants claimed that their motivation raises when they find answers to their queries instantly and at any time:

“I can't wait for my teacher to answer all my questions, Chat GPT can do all that for me in just one single click. I'm now able to learn by myself.”

Discussion

This study was designed to examine the impact of Chat GPT in enhancing communicative competence among Moroccan Economics students. To achieve this goal, first and second research questions were analysed quantitatively; however, the third research question was analysed qualitatively. Obtained data from the first research question showed that Chat GPT was the most AI tools used among Moroccan Economics students to improve their English communication skills with $n=39$. Google translate was found to be the second tool used by the participants to enhance their pronunciation skills with $n=26$. The results of the second research question revealed a significant difference between the control and experimental group. The experimental group was found to have higher scores in the speaking exam compared to students of the control group. Therefore, the findings showed the communicative competencies of the participants of this work were positively affected by Chat GPT. The results are consistent with recent research studies, [1], [2], [4], [5], [6], [9], [11] and [12] which demonstrated the effectiveness of Chat GPT as a learning tool in enhancing the oral English proficiency of EFL learners. Results analysis obtained from the third research question indicated that majority of the interviewees reported that the way of interacting with Chat GPT boosted their level of self-confidence, increased their learning motivation, autonomy, engagement and it helped in reducing students speaking anxiety. The results proved the effectiveness of Chat GPT application in improving their speaking abilities through receiving instantaneous recognition for their efforts in non-critical context. These results are consistent with previous studies conducted by [4], [5], [6], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12] and [14] which proved the effectiveness of Chat GPT in enhancing self-confidence, language proficiency, learning motivation and autonomy of the EFL learners.

Conclusion

The present study explored the effectiveness of Chat GPT in enhancing communicative competence among $n= 78$ Moroccan undergraduate students of the department of Economics of Moulay Ismail university. The results indicated that the use of Chat GPT application significantly improved the speaking skills of the participants of this work. Specifically, the experimental group proved superior performance compared to the control group. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that integrating Chat GPT in ELT



not only motivates students but also significantly enhances their performance and communication abilities. The results suggest that further research studies should explore the effectiveness of AI tools in enhancing speaking skills across different educational levels and disciplines to maximize its pedagogical impact in diverse learning contexts.

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