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TALKING TO AI: CAN CONVERSATIONAL CHATBOTS TEACH ENGLISH?

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Abstract: This article explores the role of conversational chatbots, such as ChatGPT, in English language learning. It examines how AI-powered tools enhance students’ language proficiency by providing instant feedback, interactive dialogues, and personalized learning experiences. However, alongside these benefits, the article also addresses concerns about AI’s influence on traditional language acquisition methods. As chatbot technology becomes more integrated into education, there is a growing debate over its potential drawbacks — such as reduced authenticity in communication and over-reliance on automated responses. By analyzing both the advantages and limitations of AI-driven learning, this article evaluates whether chatbots can truly replace conventional language instruction.

Keywords: conversational chatbots, language proficiency, AI, ChatGPT, traditional learning, authentic learning

INTRODUCTION

The interest in chatbots began nearly 80 years earlier, in the 1960s, when Joseph Weizenbaum developed the first chatbot ELIZA – a rule-based chatbot designed to simulate a psychotherapist’s conversation. It did not understand the conversation, but generated responses based on predetermined templates and user inputs [8]. That was the beginning of chatbots, a bit obvious for conversations but still quite unusual and supportive for mentally unstable people who needed a person around for expressing negative thoughts.

Conversational skills are typically defined as the abilities and techniques used by individuals to communicate effectively during social interactions. These skills are crucial for initiating and maintaining engaging and meaningful exchanges with other people [6,7,10]. Comparing to 1960s, the 21st century reveals a huge number of opportunities:

- Improved communication based on the newest algorithms to comprehend information twice faster and give human-like answers;

- Almost unlimited access to any sort of information – from simple lesson plans to the article;

- Flexible work-from-home and online learning opportunities that didn’t exist in the 1960s.

AI-driven scoring systems can quickly analyze student performance and offer detailed feedback, helping learners improve their skills promptly [1]. Unlike traditional methods that rely on textbooks and human instructors, AI-driven systems offer a more accessible and flexible way to practice English.

One of the key advantages of conversational chatbots is their ability to provide real-time language interaction without the pressure of face-to-face communication. This can be particularly beneficial for students who lack access to native speakers or structured classroom settings.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Approach

This study employs a qualitative and comparative analysis to assess the role of conversational AI in English language learning. The research includes a literature review, case studies, and user feedback analysis to evaluate the benefits and limitations of AI-driven language tools [3].

Data Sources

The study is based on information from the following sources:

Academic Literature – Research articles and linguistic studies on AI-assisted language learning [4]

Chatbot Platforms – Examination of popular AI-powered chatbots, including ChatGPT, Duolingo’s chatbot, Replika, and Mondly AI Tutor, focusing on their features, interaction styles, and response accuracy [2]

User Feedback & Case Studies – Analysis of reports and testimonials from learners who use AI chatbots for English practice [9]

Evaluation Criteria

To determine whether conversational chatbots can effectively teach English, the study assesses the following aspects:

Fluency & Engagement – Do chatbots encourage consistent language practice? [5]

Response Accuracy – How well do AI chatbots provide grammatically correct and contextually appropriate answers?

Personalization – Can AI adapt to learners’ proficiency levels and needs?

Limitations & Challenges – Issues such as lack of cultural context, difficulty in detecting tone, and over-reliance on AI-generated responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Conversational Chatbots in English Learning

The findings of this study suggest that AI-powered chatbots can play a valuable role in language learning, particularly in developing conversational skills and providing personalized feedback. Based on the literature review and user feedback analysis, chatbots like ChatGPT, Duolingo’s AI assistant, and Replika help learners practice English through **interactive dialogues and adaptive learning experiences**.

One of the key benefits observed is the ability of AI chatbots to provide **instant corrections and feedback**, allowing learners to recognize and fix their mistakes immediately. Traditional classroom settings may not always provide immediate feedback due to time constraints, but chatbots are available 24/7, making them a convenient option for students who want to practice regularly.

Additionally, the analysis indicates that chatbots enhance engagement and confidence in learners, particularly those who experience anxiety when speaking English with real people. The low-pressure environment of AI interactions allows students to improve fluency without the fear of being judged.

Challenges and Limitations

Despite these advantages, chatbot-based learning is not without its limitations. One major issue is the lack of deep contextual understanding and emotional intelligence. While AI chatbots can generate human-like responses, they still struggle with **cultural nuances, humor, and complex discussions**. Unlike human teachers, chatbots cannot detect **tone, emotions, or deeper meaning** in conversations, which limits their ability to teach natural and socially appropriate communication.

Moreover, AI-generated responses are not always 100% accurate. Some users reported that chatbots occasionally provide grammatically incorrect or contextually inappropriate answers, leading to potential misinformation. This highlights the importance of human supervision in AI-based learning, as students still need **teachers or language experts** to clarify doubts and ensure accurate learning.

Another concern is **over-reliance on AI tools**. Since chatbots provide structured responses, learners may become dependent on pre-set patterns, reducing their ability to think critically and respond spontaneously in real-life conversations. Unlike human interaction, where language is dynamic and unpredictable, chatbot conversations may lack true variety and complexity.

CONCLUSION

The integration of AI-powered conversational chatbots in English language learning presents both promising opportunities and notable challenges. These tools provide immediate

feedback, accessibility, and personalized learning experiences, making them valuable supplements to traditional language education. Learners benefit from enhanced engagement, increased confidence, and flexible practice sessions that were previously unavailable in conventional classroom settings.

However, AI chatbots are not without limitations. Their inability to fully grasp cultural nuances, emotional tone, and complex language structures means they cannot entirely replace human instructors. Additionally, occasional inaccuracies and over-reliance on AI responses highlight the need for careful integration of chatbot technology in education.

Looking ahead, the role of AI in language learning will likely evolve toward a blended approach, where chatbots assist with language practice while teachers provide guidance, context, and real-life interaction. By combining the strengths of AI with human expertise, learners can develop more authentic, well-rounded communication skills, ensuring that technology enhances — rather than replaces — the natural process of language acquisition.

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