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Faculty of Philology



**«МӘДЕНИЕТАРАЛЫҚ КОММУНИКАЦИЯ:
ШЕТЕЛ ТІЛДЕРІН ОҚЫТУДЫҢ ЗАМАНАУЫ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ»**
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Authors are fully responsible for the content of research papers and the correctness of the facts indicated in them.

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Аңдатпа. Қазіргі жаһандану жағдайында ағылшын тілін білу маңызды бола түсуде. Осылайша, оқытушылар мен зерттеушілер тілді зерттеу нәтижелерін жақсартудың инновациялық әдістерін зерттейді. Жасанды интеллект (AI) технологияларын ағылшын тілін оқытуға біріктіру перспективалы бағыттардың бірі болып табылады. Бұл мақала ағылшын тілін үйренудегі ауызекі жасанды интеллекттің тиімділігін зерттейді, оның жеке оқытудағы рөліне және дәстүрлі оқыту шектеулерін жеңу әлеуетіне назар аударады. TOEFL қоғамдық сынақ емтихандарындағы Үш әңгіме сұрақ қоюшы ретінде жасанды интеллект сөйлесу жүйесінің тиімділігін бағалайтын 20 минуттық сабақтар жасау үшін пайдаланылды. Unity көмегімен және Aila кейіпкерімен жасалған қосымша ағылшын тілін үйренушілерге ыңғайлы интерфейс ұсынады. Нәтижелер жүйенің оқытушыларды тартудағы және табиғи тіл тәжірибесін ынталандырудағы тиімділігін көрсетеді, бұл оның тіл үйрену тәжірибесін жақсарту әлеуетін көрсетеді. Бұл зерттеу жасанды интеллект технологияларының білім берудегі, әсіресе тіл үйренудегі трансформациялық әсерін көрсетеді, бұл бейімделгіш және жекелендірілген оқу орталарына жол ашады.

Түйін сөздер: ауызекі жасанды Интеллект (ConvAI), ConvAI, ағылшын тілін оқыту, тіл

Аннотация. В условиях современной глобализации владение английским языком приобретает все большее значение. Таким образом, преподаватели и исследователи изучают инновационные методы для улучшения результатов изучения языка. Одним из многообещающих направлений является интеграция технологий искусственного интеллекта (ИИ) в преподавание английского языка. В этой статье исследуется эффективность разговорного искусственного интеллекта в изучении английского языка, основное внимание уделяется его роли в индивидуальном обучении и его потенциалу для преодоления традиционных ограничений в обучении. Три беседы из общедоступных пробных экзаменов TOEFL были использованы для создания 20-минутных уроков, оценивающих эффективность разговорной системы искусственного интеллекта в качестве задающего вопросы. Приложение, разработанное с использованием Unity и с персонажем Aila, предоставляет удобный интерфейс, адаптированный для изучающих английский язык. Результаты свидетельствуют об эффективности системы в привлечении учащихся и стимулировании практики естественного языка, демонстрируя ее потенциал для улучшения опыта изучения языка. Это исследование подчеркивает преобразующее влияние технологий искусственного интеллекта в образовании, особенно в изучении языков, прокладывая путь к более адаптивным и персонализированным учебным средам.

Ключевые слова: Разговорный Искусственный Интеллект (ConvAI), ConvAI, преподавание английского языка, изучение языка,

Abstract. In the contemporary globalized landscape, English proficiency is increasingly crucial. As such, educators and researchers are exploring innovative methods to enhance language learning outcomes. One promising avenue is the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies into English language teaching. This paper investigates the efficacy of Conversational AI in English language learning, focusing on its role in personalized tutoring experiences and its potential to overcome traditional learning constraints. Three conversations from publicly available TOEFL mock exams were utilized to construct 20-minute lessons, evaluating the Conversational AI system's performance as the questioner. The application, developed using Unity and featuring the character Aila, provides a user-friendly interface tailored for English learners. Results indicate the system's effectiveness in engaging learners and fostering natural language practice, demonstrating its potential to enhance language learning experiences. This research underscores the transformative impact of AI technologies in education, particularly in language learning, paving the way for more adaptive and personalized learning environments.

Keywords: Conversational Artificial Intelligence (ConvAI), ConvAI, English language teaching, language learning,

үйрену, жеке оқыту, диалогтық персонализированное сөйлеу.

обучение, personalized learning, dialogic speaking.

INTRODUCTION

In today's increasingly globalized world, acquiring English proficiency is becoming progressively pivotal [1]. With the increasing demand for English language proficiency, educators and researchers are exploring novel methods to improve language learning results. One particularly notable approach receiving significant interest involves incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies into English language teaching.

Artificial Intelligence, known for its capacity to mimic human intelligence, has progressed notably in recent times, infiltrating numerous sectors of society [2]. Within education, there's a growing interest in utilizing AI as a valuable resource to bolster language acquisition, especially in improving learners' communication abilities [3]. AI presents opportunities for customized, interactive, and flexible learning encounters tailored to the specific requirements and interests of individual learners [4].

In teaching languages, it has been recognized that AI fulfills four distinct roles: profiling and prediction, assessment and evaluation, adaptive systems and personalization, and intelligent tutoring systems [5]. The integration of Conversational AI within educational settings offers a transformative approach to learning, leveraging technology to extend personalized tutoring experiences beyond traditional classroom boundaries. By providing tailored assistance and feedback, these systems address the challenges posed by limited access to qualified educators and enable students to engage in interactive learning experiences at their own pace. Furthermore, Conversational AI enhances learning accessibility by offering round-the-clock support and personalized guidance, fostering a conducive environment for individualized skill development and academic growth. This innovative technology not only augments classroom learning but also empowers learners to achieve their long-term educational goals through continuous support, adaptive learning strategies, and personalized feedback mechanisms [6]. Chatbots, propelled by advancements in speech recognition and natural language processing, offer a promising avenue to facilitate natural and engaging language practice, particularly beneficial for new language learners hesitant to engage in spoken practice with others. Their user-friendly and non-intimidating interface fosters a supportive environment, potentially surpassing traditional language learning methods, as evidenced by the increasing commercial adoption of chatbot systems like English Liulishuo, utilized by millions worldwide [7].

The aim of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Conversational AI (Convai) in improving high-school students' speaking skills. This research utilizes pre-test and post-test analysis to assess the impact of Convai on students' speaking proficiency. By examining the integration of Conversational AI technology within English language teaching, particularly focusing on speaking proficiency, this study aims to evaluate its impact on enhancing dialogic speaking among high-school learners. Through the analysis of Convai's role in providing personalized tutoring experiences and facilitating natural language practice, the research seeks to determine its effectiveness as a tool for improving speaking proficiency in the context of secondary education.

METHODOLOGY

Materials. We selected three conversations from the listening portion of publicly accessible TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) mock exams [8]. The TOEFL exam is widely recognized and commonly required for admission to English-speaking universities. The speaking section of the TOEFL exam consists of four tasks designed to assess a test taker's ability to communicate effectively in English in academic settings. These tasks include expressing opinions, summarizing information from reading and listening materials, and synthesizing information from multiple sources.

The selected conversations cover various topics related to college life, such as academic courses, campus resources, and student activities. Each conversation is suitable in terms of length

and complexity for constructing 20-minute lessons. Moreover, the standardized nature of the TOEFL test facilitates evaluation using grading rubrics, aiding the assessment process. While the actual TOEFL listening tasks were not utilized, the structure of the TOEFL speaking section provided a framework for designing Convai's conversational interactions. The TOEFL speaking section typically assesses various speaking skills, including expressing opinions, summarizing information, and synthesizing information from multiple sources. Convai's conversational interactions were designed to incorporate elements of these tasks, allowing students to practice similar skills in a simulated environment.

Each task in the TOEFL speaking section is scored on a scale of 0 to 4, with a maximum total score of 30 for the entire speaking section. Scores are based on criteria such as content, delivery, language use, and coherence. The students were evaluated based on standardized scoring rubrics to ensure consistency and fairness in scoring.

By selecting conversations from the listening portion of TOEFL mock exams, we aimed to provide students with authentic materials that align with the structure and scoring criteria of the TOEFL speaking section, thereby facilitating their preparation for academic English proficiency exams.

In each conversation, there were two distinct roles: the "questioner" initiates the dialogue with a question, while the "responder" provided an answer. Although both participants engage in questioning and answering throughout the conversation, they are identified based on their initial roles for clarity. The topics of the three conversations revolved around matters pertinent to university students, such as classes and professors, booking study rooms, and replacing an ID card. In our research, ConvAI assumes the role of the questioner by initiating the conversation, while the user takes on the role of the responder by providing responses.

Interface. The application was developed in Unity, a cross-platform game engine. The character, Aila (AI+language) was created through the Convai system and designed to interact specifically with English learners, remaining within the confines of language learning interactions (refer to Figure 1). Users initiate engagement with Aila by pressing the designated "T" key, prompting the conversation transcription to appear on the interface window. Additionally, users have the flexibility to customize the appearance of the interface window, selecting between Subtitles or Question-Answer formats (Figure 2). An Android version of the application was also developed, ensuring wider reach and usability (Figure 3).

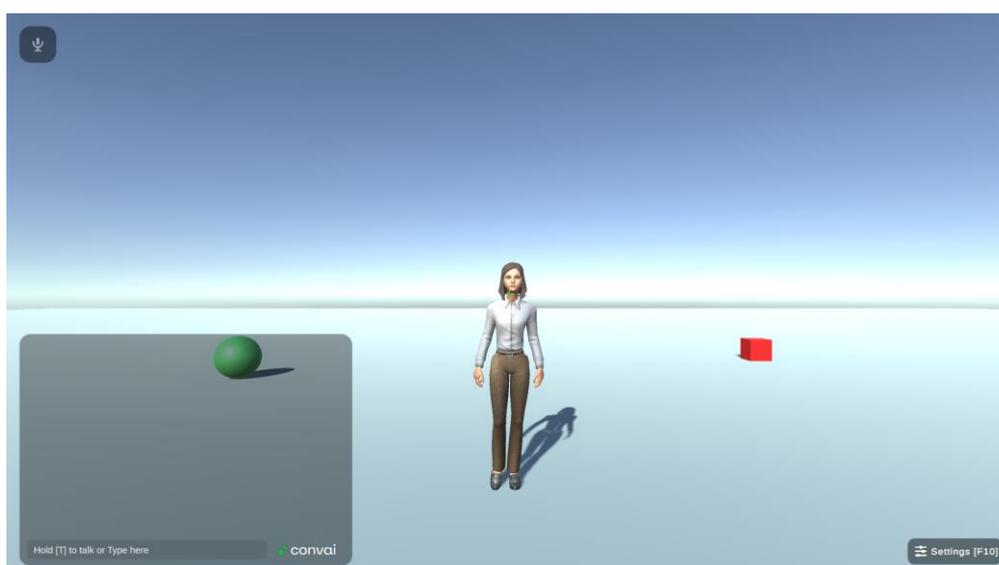


Figure 1. Windows interface

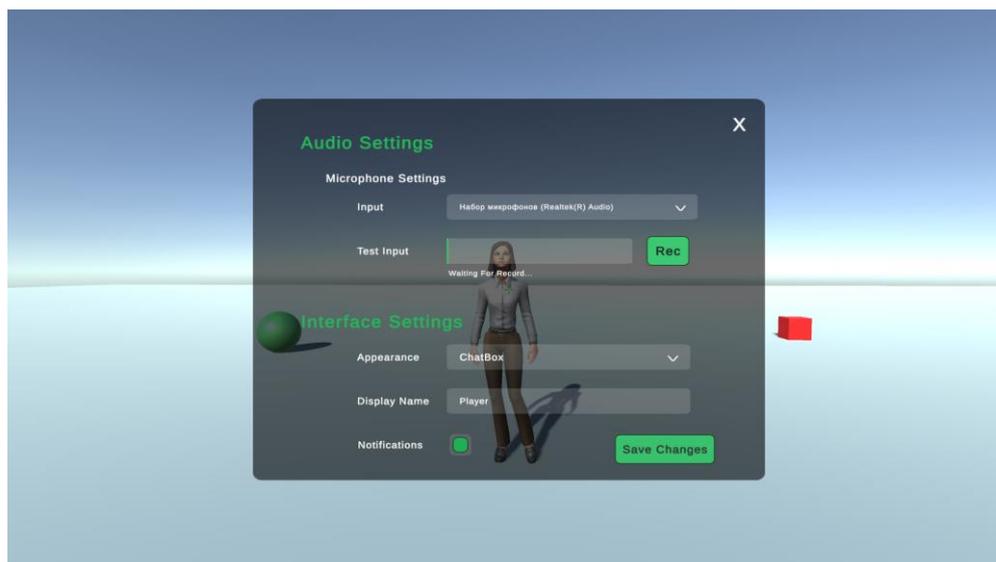


Figure 2. User settings options



Figure 3. Android version

Research design. This study employed a quasi-experimental research design to assess the effectiveness of Conversational AI (Convai) in teaching speaking skills to high-school students. Specifically, a pre-test/post-test design with a control group was utilized to measure the impact of the Convai intervention on students' speaking proficiency.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental group, which received instruction using the Convai system, or the control group, which received traditional instruction without the use of Convai. The pre-test was administered to all participants to establish baseline speaking proficiency levels before the intervention.

The intervention involved participants in the experimental group engaging in structured conversations with the Convai system, while the control group received instruction through conventional methods. The conversations were based on selected topics relevant to high-school students' experiences, similar to those found in the listening portion of TOEFL mock exams.

After the intervention period, a post-test was administered to both groups to assess any changes in speaking proficiency. The post-test consisted of similar conversation tasks to the pre-test but with different prompts to ensure validity and prevent participants from memorizing responses.

Quantitative analysis was conducted to compare the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, using statistical methods such as t-tests or analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to determine if there were significant differences in speaking proficiency between the two groups. Dependent variable - speaking proficiency scores on the post-test; independent variable - group (experimental vs. control); covariate - speaking proficiency scores on the pre-test.

Additionally, qualitative data was collected from the experimental group students through a participant feedback survey to gain insights into participants' experiences with the Convai system and its impact on their language learning process.

By employing a quasi-experimental design, this study aimed to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Conversational AI in enhancing speaking proficiency among high-school students, contributing to the ongoing discourse on innovative approaches to language teaching and learning.

RESULTS

Twenty 9th-grade students of the National School of Physics and Math in Astana participated in the study, with ten students assigned to the experimental group and ten to the control group. The purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of Conversational AI (Convai) in improving speaking proficiency among high-school students.

Descriptive statistics for the speaking proficiency scores on the post-test are presented in Table 1. The mean speaking proficiency score for the experimental group was 24 (SD = 5), while the mean score for the control group was 22 (SD = 6). (All the post-test speaking proficiency scores of the students in the experimental group were summed and divided by the total number of students in the experimental and control groups).

Overall, these findings suggest that the implementation of Conversational AI in teaching speaking skills resulted in slight improvements in speaking proficiency among 9th-grade students. These results have important implications for the integration of technology-enhanced language learning tools in secondary education settings.

Diagram 1. Pre- and Post-test results of the experimental group

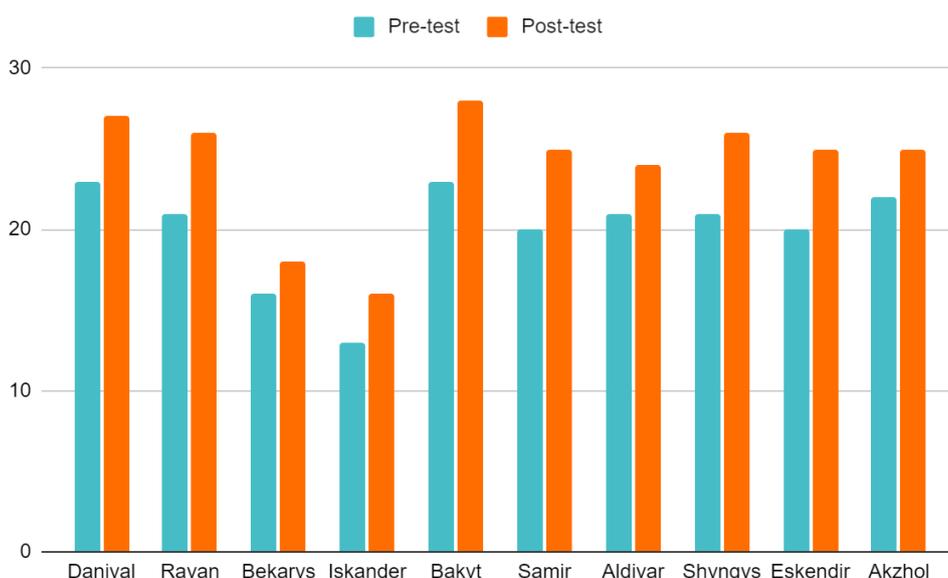


Diagram 2. Pre- and Post-test results of the control group

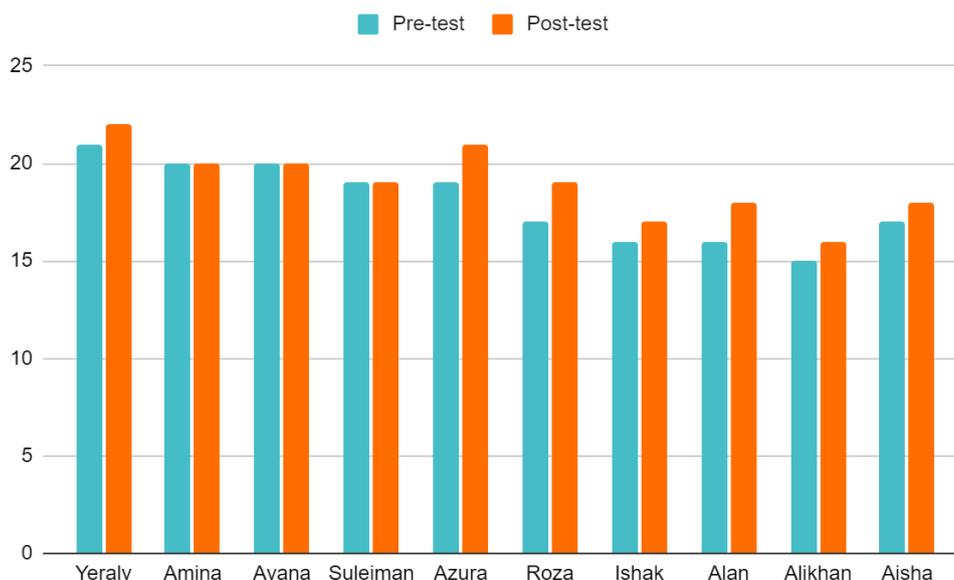


Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Speaking Proficiency Scores on the Post-Test

	Pre-test Score average	Post-test Score average	Mean Difference
Experimental Group (ConvAI)	20	24	+4
Control Group (Traditional)	18	19	+1

The user experience survey results, based on feedback from 10 students of the experiment group, revealed a positive acceptance of the AILA ConvAI system among English learners. The survey consisted of 5 questions, 3 of them being yes/no questions, and 2 rating scale questions. Among the participants, there were nine 15-year-olds and a 14-year-old.

On a scale from 1-5 80% of the learners rated their satisfaction with the overall experience with AILA as 5, 20% – 4. 100% of the participants found the conversations with AILA engaging and helpful in improving their speaking skills. On a scale from 1-5 40% of the users rated the clarity and naturalness of the Convai as 5, 30% – 4, 30% – 3. 100% of the participants felt that AILA addressed their individual learning needs and preferences adequately. 100% of the participants recommend AILA to other English language learners (refer to Appendix 1 to see the survey results).

DISCUSSION

The results indicate that students in the experimental group, who received instruction using the Convai system, demonstrated higher speaking proficiency scores compared to those in the control group, who received traditional instruction. These results have important implications for the future of language education, particularly in secondary school settings. The successful implementation of Conversational AI in teaching speaking skills not only addresses the challenges posed by traditional classroom constraints but also offers opportunities for more adaptive and personalized learning experiences. By leveraging technology to extend personalized tutoring beyond the confines of traditional classroom boundaries, educators can enhance students' language learning outcomes and foster a conducive environment for individualized skill development. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on the transformative impact of AI technologies in education, highlighting the potential of Conversational AI to revolutionize language teaching and learning practices.

Further research should explore long-term effects and optimal integration strategies.

In implementing Conversational AI (ConvAI) for language learning, several ethical considerations must be carefully addressed to safeguard the welfare and rights of participants. Firstly, ensuring informed consent is paramount. Before engaging with ConvAI, participants, particularly high-school students and their guardians, should be fully informed about the purpose of the technology, the nature of their participation, and any potential risks or benefits involved. Consent should be voluntary, informed, and obtained prior to participation.

Transparency is essential to maintain trust and foster informed engagement with ConvAI. Users should be made aware that they are interacting with an AI system and not a human. Clear explanations of the system's capabilities, limitations, and purpose in the educational context should be provided to users, enabling them to make informed decisions about their participation.

Overall, ethical considerations surrounding ConvAI in language learning encompass informed consent, privacy and data security, transparency and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Addressing these ethical considerations is crucial to promote ethical and responsible use of ConvAI in education, ultimately enhancing the learning experiences of students while safeguarding their rights and well-being.

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