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## EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHATGPT AS A CONVERSATIONAL PARTNER ON EFL STUDENT'S SPEAKING SKILLS: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY IN INDONESIA HIGHER EDUCATION

By

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### Abstract:

This study explores the effectiveness of ChatGPT in enhancing the speaking skills of EFL undergraduate students in the Hospital Administration program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro. A quasi-experimental research design was employed, involving 42 first-semester students divided into two groups: 21 students in ARS 1 as the experimental group and 21 students in ARS 2 as the control group. The experimental group received treatment using specific prompts designed to initiate conversations with ChatGPT. Data were collected through oral tests conducted before and after the intervention (pre-test and post-test). The results indicate a statistically significant improvement in the speaking skills of students in the experimental group. Hypothesis testing showed a significant value of  $<0.000$  for the first hypothesis and  $0.004$  for the second, both below the threshold of  $0.05$ , indicating that the alternative hypotheses were accepted. In conclusion, the use of ChatGPT had a positive and significant effect on improving the speaking skills of EFL students in the Hospital Administration program. The results highlight the potential of ChatGPT to supplement classroom speaking activities, while contributing to research on AI in EFL learning.

**Keywords:** ChatGPT, Speaking skill, EFL Undergraduate student

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi efektivitas ChatGPT dalam meningkatkan kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa sarjana EFL di program Administrasi Rumah Sakit Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro. Desain penelitian kuasi-eksperimental digunakan, melibatkan 42 mahasiswa semester pertama yang dibagi menjadi dua kelompok: 21 mahasiswa di ARS 1 sebagai kelompok eksperimen dan 21 mahasiswa di ARS 2 sebagai kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen menerima perawatan menggunakan petunjuk khusus yang dirancang untuk memulai percakapan dengan ChatGPT. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes oral yang dilakukan sebelum dan sesudah intervensi (pra-tes dan pasca-tes). Hasilnya menunjukkan peningkatan yang signifikan secara statistik dalam keterampilan berbicara siswa dalam kelompok eksperimen. Pengujian hipotesis menunjukkan nilai signifikansi  $<0,000$  untuk hipotesis pertama dan  $0,004$  untuk hipotesis kedua, keduanya di bawah ambang batas  $0,05$ , menunjukkan bahwa hipotesis alternatif diterima. Kesimpulannya, penggunaan ChatGPT memiliki efek

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*positif dan signifikan dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa EFL dalam program Administrasi Rumah Sakit. Penelitian ini menegaskan potensi ChatGPT sebagai sarana pendukung dalam pelaksanaan kegiatan berbicara di kelas juga memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian mengenai penerapan kecerdasan buatan (AI) dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing (EFL).*

**Kata kunci:** *ChatGPT, Keterampilan berbicara, Mahasiswa Sarjana EFL*

## INTRODUCTION

English has emerged as the universal language for communication, education, and professional interaction (Huy et al., 2024). Fluency in English is crucial for students to acquire knowledge, exchange ideas, and engage in academic and social environments (Akhter, 2021). Of the four language abilities, speaking is frequently considered the most crucial yet the most difficult to perfect, as it requires the simultaneous integration of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency (Brown, 2004; Islam & Roy, 2024). In numerous EFL circumstances, such as Indonesia, students encounter challenges in expressing ideas due to restricted exposure, anxiety, and insufficient practice opportunities (Desnaranti & Putra, 2022). Consequently, enhancing students' speaking proficiency is a fundamental goal of English language instruction, especially in higher education.

To address these issues, educators and academics have pursued novel strategies to create significant speaking opportunities for students. The advancement of digital technology, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), has created fresh possibilities for enhancing the interactivity and independence of language acquisition (Kohnke et al., 2023). ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI, is an AI-driven language model capable of producing human-like responses and facilitating natural dialogues with learners (OpenAI, 2023). ChatGPT delivers immediate feedback through real-time engagement, simulates genuine conversations, and creates a low-anxiety setting for learners to independently practice speaking abilities (Du & Daniel, 2024). These features render ChatGPT a valuable instrument for enhancing speaking proficiency and converting conventional EFL classrooms into more interactive and student-centered settings.

A multitude of studies have examined ChatGPT's influence on the enhancement of EFL speaking skills. Muniandy and Selvanathan (2024) demonstrated that ChatGPT

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enhanced students' motivation and vocabulary proficiency in Malaysian higher education. Likewise, Kim and Lee (2023) indicated that voice-enabled ChatGPT enhanced learners' fluency and confidence in Korean EFL lessons. Nhu (2024) discovered that ChatGPT-assisted speaking practice in Vietnam resulted in enhanced fluency, grammar, and pronunciation. Salsabil and Rakhmawati (2025) found that the incorporation of ChatGPT into Indonesian EFL speaking courses enhanced students' confidence in concept expression and diminished communication anxiety. Nuñez et al. (2025) observed that ChatGPT Voice improved pronunciation and fluency, whereas Huang (2024) illustrated that voice prompts in ChatGPT might enhance feedback and pronunciation precision. Moreover, Üstünbaş (2024) highlighted that ChatGPT facilitates unique speaking experiences customized to the specific needs of individual learners. Collectively, these data validate the increasing efficacy of ChatGPT in enhancing students' speaking abilities in diverse EFL environments.

While prior research has demonstrated favorable results from utilizing ChatGPT for speaking practice, most student-AI encounters were unstructured and devoid of targeted conversational direction (Alsalem, 2024; Phuong, 2024). Unstructured discussions frequently resulted in poor communication and restricted learning emphasis. Huang (2024) asserted that carefully designed prompts can direct AI responses, hence facilitating more pertinent and significant dialogues. Nevertheless, limited study has examined how particular prompts crafted by instructors can enhance the quality of AI interactions and result in quantifiable improvements in speaking skills. This study aims to utilize ChatGPT with specific prompts as a conversational partner to enhance the speaking skill of EFL students within the Indonesian higher education framework.

Numerous current research has concentrated predominantly on learners' perceptions or attitudes instead of actual performance outcomes. Zakiyah (2025) emphasized that perception-based assessments are insufficient for evaluating student's linguistic development. Limited research has employed experimental methodologies utilizing pre-test and post-test data to assess the actual effect of ChatGPT on speaking proficiency. Furthermore, in Indonesia, studies examining the quantitative impact of ChatGPT utilization in EFL classes are rare. This study methodologically contributes by utilizing a quasi-experimental

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methodology to assess the quantifiable effectiveness of ChatGPT using specific prompts in enhancing students' speaking skill.

This study is based on Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which claims that language acquisition emerges through the negotiation of meaning in interactions. ChatGPT offers a platform that facilitates learners in generating, receiving, and altering input through continuous dialogue. This also corresponds with constructivist learning theory, which prioritizes learner-centered and self-directed education (Szabó & Csépes, 2022). Utilizing particular prompts, ChatGPT can enhance communication and enable controlled interactions that foster both fluency and accuracy. Theoretical foundations support the incorporation of ChatGPT as an interactive conversational partner in EFL speaking education.

This study is limited to focus on the integration of ChatGPT as a conversational partner for speaking in the first semester of Hospital Administration study program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro in academic year 2024/2025. The research questions are as follows:

1. Is there any effect of utilizing ChatGPT on speaking skills of EFL undergraduate students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro?
2. To what extent does the use of ChatGPT improve students' speaking proficiency compared to traditional instruction?

## **METHOD**

### ***Design***

This research used a quantitative quasi-experimental design to meet the inclusion of treatments, evaluations of impact, and experimental components, although it lacks random assignment for establishing comparisons to determine the effects of the treatments (Raihan, 2017). The researcher selected this strategy to directly control the experiment and obtain clear and conclusive data based on numerical evidence. The independent variable of this study was the use of ChatGPT as a conversational partner for speaking practice. The dependent variable was students' speaking skill, operationally defined as performance scores in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and task achievement. This research design comprised two separate class groups.

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**Tabel 1. Research Design**

<i>Class</i>	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
<i>E</i>	<i>01</i>	<i>X</i>	<i>02</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>03</i>	-	<i>04</i>

Notes:

- E : Experiment class
- C : Control class
- 01 : Pre-test in experiment class
- 02 : Post-test in experiment class
- : Conventional technique
- X : Treatment in the experiment class (Conversation with ChatGPT)
- 03 : Pre-test in control class
- 04 : Post-test in control class

(Sugiyono, 2022)

### ***Participant***

The study population involved first-semester EFL undergraduate students in Hospital Administration at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro. There are 2 classes in this batch consisting of 42 students. The sampling approach used total sampling due to limited classes. Total sampling is a method in which every participant of the population is included as a sample (Siyoto & Sodik, 2015). The researcher utilized two present classes: ARS 1 as the first paper out is the experimental class and ARS 2 as the control class.

### ***Instrument***

The instrument of this research employed oral tests and administrated in pre-test and post-test. The oral test consists of 1 instruction about make a conversation in specific prompt with ChatGPT with the topic “**My Dream Job.**” They need to expand on their assignment in speaking. The students recorded their conversation and submitted the recording to the Google Drive provided by the researchers. The content validity of the test was assessed by consulting 2 expert validators, a General English lecturer in ARS and a speaking lecturer. The reliability of the test was assessed using Inter-Rater Reliability (IRR) with Cohen’s Kappa, which yielded  $\kappa = 0.127$ , indicating slight agreement between raters. The oral test produced quantitative data in the form of numerical speaking scores ranging from 50 to 100, based on Ismailia's (2021) rubric. The rubric evaluated pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and task achievement.

**Data collecting techniques.**

The researcher employed an oral examination to assess students' speaking skills. The assessment was conducted during the pre-test and post-test. Then, the researcher administered the treatment exclusively to the students in the experimental group, while the control group received traditional instruction. To minimize bias in ChatGPT's responses, structured and guiding prompts were used to standardize interactions and maintain topic relevance. The researchers provide helping prompts to help students use ChatGPT for their conversation. This ensured consistency among participants during speaking tasks. ChatGPT was accessed through the mobile application on smartphones, using the same free-tier version (ChatGPT 3.5) to ensure uniform access and functionality. The researcher directed the students to participate in conversation practice with ChatGPT on several topics during each meeting. The treatment was conducted over four sessions. The post-test oral examination comprised one instruction to engage in a conversation with ChatGPT repeating the pre-test.

**Table 2. The prompts**

<i>Prompts to talk with ChatGPT</i>	
<i>For Taking the Test</i>	<i>"Hi ChatGPT please make a conversation with me about my dream job"</i>
<i>Telling your Job looks like</i>	<i>"Let's talk about my dream job and you can ask me what my dream job look like"</i>
<i>Telling your reason to get the job</i>	<i>"Let's talk about my dream job and you can ask my reason why"</i>
<i>Telling your job's the challenges</i>	<i>"Let's talk about my dream job and you can ask the challenges to be my dream job"</i>
<i>Telling your preparation to get the job</i>	<i>"Let's talk about my dream job and you can ask me how I can prepare to reach it"</i>
<i>Helping Prompt</i>	
<i>To translate to Indonesia.</i>	<i>"Translate in Indonesia please"</i>
<i>Returning ChatGPT to English.</i>	<i>"Talk in English again please"</i>
<i>If you are uncertain about how to respond.</i>	<i>"What should I answer to this question?"</i>
<i>Do not comprehend and request that ChatGPT clarify its previous statement.</i>	<i>"I don't understand, repeat please"</i>
<i>If the response from ChatGPT is unsuitable.</i>	<i>"That's not what I mean, I mean..."</i>
<i>To request an additional question if ChatGPT stops generating queries.</i>	<i>"Next question please"/ "Please ask me anything related to the topic"</i>
<i>If the discussion departs from the initial subject title.</i>	<i>"Back to our topic please"</i>
<i>Ask for the feedback</i>	<i>"Please give me a feedback for my speaking." "How can I improve my speaking?"</i>

**Data analysis technique**

After data collection, the researcher conducted an analysis of the pre-test and post-test outcomes employing several statistical tests. A normality test was performed to ascertain if the data were from a normally distributed population. The Shapiro-Wilk test in SPSS indicates that the data was normally distributed if the significance value (Sig) was above 0.05, and non-normally distributed if the value was below 0.05. The result of both the experimental and control groups exhibited significance values exceeding 0.05 for pre-test and post-test results (0.019, 0.019, 0.096, 0.014, respectively). It means that the data were regularly distributed. The homogeneity test was conducted to see whether the sample groups exhibited same variation. The researcher conducted a One-Way ANOVA test. The test analysis yielded an Fcount value of 0.524 and a significance value (p-value) of 0.473. The assumption of homogeneity of variances is fulfilled if the Fcount value is less than or equal to the f-table value, or if the significance value is larger than or equal to 0.05. The analysis results show the data is homogeneous because the Fcount value above the Ftable value ( $0.524 < 4.0847$ ), the significance value of 0.473 exceeds 0.05.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**Finding**

The answering aspect of this research is hypothesis testing, employed to determine the acceptance or rejection of the hypothesis. In advance of testing the hypothesis, the researcher compared the outcomes of the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group.

**Table 3. The result of pre-test and post-test in control and experiment class**

<i>Class</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Pre-test</i>	<i>Mean Post-test</i>	<i>Mean Different</i>
<i>Experiment</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>55.19</i>	<i>58.29</i>	<i>3,1</i>
<i>Control</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>54.24</i>	<i>54.33</i>	<i>0,09</i>

Table means of the experimental class is greater than that of control class in both pre-test and post-test. Hence, the mean difference of the experimental group is greater than the control group ( $3,1 > 0,09$ ). To answer the first research question, “Is there any effect of utilizing ChatGPT on speaking skill of EFL undergraduate students at Universitas

Muhammadiyah Metro?” a hypothesis test was “paired sample t- test” (Table 4).

**Table 4. The result of paired sample test**

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair	Pretest - Posttest	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
1		-3,095	1,972	0,430	-3,993	-2,197	-7,191	20	0,000

Table 4 shows that the significant value (2-tailed) of 0.000 is less than the error level of 5% (0.05). The significant value is less than 0.05 (sig < 0.05). The first hypothesis indicates that Ha is approved. While the second research question; “how significant is the effect of ChatGPT on speaking skill of EFL undergraduate students at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro? The researcher utilized the independent sample t-test (Table 5).

**Table 5. The result of independent sample test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
Students' Learning Outcomes	Equal variances assumed	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Students' Learning Outcomes	Equal variances assumed	0,859	0,360	3,055	40	0,004	3,952	1,294	1,338	6,567
	Equal variances not assumed			3,055	39,962	0,004	3,952	1,294	1,338	6,567

Table 5 shows that the significant values (2-tailed) of 0.004 below the error level of 5% (0.05). The substantial value is less than 0.05 (sig < 0.05) indicates the second hypothesis  $H_a$  is approved.

### ***Discussion***

This study's findings indicated that students who engaged in speaking practice with ChatGPT employing specific prompts attained significantly higher post-test scores compared to those who received conventional classroom teaching. This outcome demonstrates that the use of AI-driven conversational bots with specific prompts can significantly improve the speaking skill of EFL learners. The enhancement aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theory, which believes that learning grows more significant when learners are actively involved in meaningful and directed interactions (Szabó & Csépes, 2022).

These findings correspond with prior research indicating the advantages of ChatGPT in enhancing speaking skills within EFL environments. Muniandy and Selvanathan (2024) discovered that ChatGPT markedly enhanced students' motivation and lexical growth, whilst Kim and Lee (2023) fluency. Nhu (2024) and Nuñez et al. (2025) similarly shown that AI-driven discussion improved students' pronunciation and grammatical precision. In the Indonesian context, Salsabil and Rakhmawati (2025) found that the utilization of ChatGPT reduced learners' speaking anxiety and fostered greater confidence in concept expression. The consistent findings indicate that ChatGPT fosters a supportive learning environment, enabling students to practice speaking in low-anxiety, feedback-rich contexts (Du & Daniel, 2024).

This study diverges from previous studies by utilizing particular conversational cues instead of open-ended chat. Prior studies conducted by Alsalem (2024) and Phuong (2024) indicated that unstructured interactions using ChatGPT occasionally resulted in irrelevant responses or repeating topics. This study employed teacher-created prompts to facilitate concentrated, topic-specific dialogue and significant language production. Huang (2024) underscored the importance of prompt-based scaffolding in directing learners towards communicative objectives. The notable enhancement in the experimental group's speaking

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scores can be attributed to the carefully created prompt design that optimized the advantages of AI engagement.

The findings for the second research question indicated that ChatGPT, when utilized with particular prompts, enhanced not only overall speaking proficiency but also significantly influenced various sub-skills: fluency, vocabulary, and confidence in oral communication. Students exhibited enhanced lexical diversity, more fluid delivery, and less hesitancy relative to the control group. The findings substantiate the claim that AI-driven technologies such as ChatGPT facilitate real-time modeling of target language usage, helping learners in cultivating automaticity and self-monitoring skills (Kohnke et al., 2023). Furthermore, Pratiwi et al. (2024) observed that organized AI engagement can reduce affective barriers, such as the fear of making errors, hence enabling learners to engage more confidently in speaking tasks.

The enhancement noted in this study aligns with Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis, which underscores the negotiation of meaning and interactional feedback promote second language acquisition. Students interacting with ChatGPT via structured prompts encountered genuine linguistic input and prompt corrective feedback, facilitating enhanced language processing. Comparable results were documented by Zakiyah (2025) who discovered that AI interaction markedly improved students' fluency via continuous conversational engagement. Consequently, the current findings reinforce the theoretical premise that significant human-AI interaction can replicate the advantages of human-to-human communication in language acquisition.

Despite these beneficial results, certain limitations must be considered. The study encompassed a limited sample of participants from a singular institution, constraining the generalizability of the results. Moreover, although the use of specific prompts facilitated concentrated practice, it may have limited students' creativity and diminished chances for spontaneous expression during dialogue. Future research should investigate the balance between structured and open-ended prompts to enhance learner engagement and communication skills.

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The outcomes of this research confirm that ChatGPT, when utilized with particular prompts, can significantly improve the speaking performance of EFL students. The use of AI-driven dialogue systems in language classrooms signifies a promising educational advancement that enhances learner autonomy, decreases fear, and promotes active participation. The findings present empirical evidence that well-designed and directed AI technologies can aid in fulfilling the objectives of communicative language teaching in higher education.

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

### *Conclusion*

The findings of this study demonstrate that ChatGPT has a statistically significant effect on the speaking skills of first-semester EFL undergraduate students in the Hospital Administration program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro. The results of the hypothesis testing showed a significant improvement in the experimental group compared to the control group, as reflected by the mean score difference and supported by a p-value of 0.000.

Furthermore, the moderate effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.60$ ) suggests that ChatGPT contributes meaningfully to speaking skill development, particularly in areas such as fluency and vocabulary use. These findings answer the research questions by confirming that ChatGPT not only has an effect but also provides a moderate advantage over traditional methods when used with structured prompts.

This study highlights the potential of AI-powered tools like ChatGPT as a complementary learning aid, especially for self-practice in speaking tasks. Future research is recommended to explore its long-term effectiveness, impact on other language skills, and the role of advanced prompt engineering in enhancing learning outcomes.

### *Limitation*

This study was conducted with first-semester students of the Hospital Administration program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Metro. The study was restricted by the small sample size (21 students per group) and the employment of particular prompts, which, while beneficial for directing focus and structure, may have limited students' creativity and spontaneous language creation. Furthermore, the wide range in ChatGPT's generated

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responses and the disparities in students' engagement styles may have impacted the overall consistency of the speaking outcomes. Future study should involve larger numbers of participants and devise prompt designs that balance structure with open-ended engagement to facilitate more authentic communication.

### ***Implication***

The findings highlight the potential of ChatGPT as a supplementary tool in language classrooms, especially for speaking practice. Educators are encouraged to incorporate AI tools like ChatGPT into lesson plans with well-designed, pedagogically sound prompts to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing bias. Students may benefit from regular, self-directed speaking sessions using AI tools to build confidence and fluency. Future researchers should investigate the broader application of ChatGPT in different skills (e.g., writing, listening) and explore advanced prompt engineering strategies to optimize learning outcomes.

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