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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AI-ASSISTED PERSONALIZED ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN DEVELOPING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS’ COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract. This paper looks at how AI-assisted personalized learning can help secondary school students in Uzbekistan improve their communicative competence in English. Many students study English for years but still find it hard to speak freely. Grammar and reading are often practiced more than speaking, because teachers cannot give personal attention to every student in a big class. AI tools can help with this problem because they give each learner their own pace, their own tasks, and quick feedback. Moreover AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quizlet AI provide students with personalized learning activities, immediate feedback, and adaptive practice based on their individual learning needs, proficiency level, and pace. In this study, one group of students used an AI-based learning app for eight weeks together with their normal lessons, while another group studied in the usual way. Both groups took a speaking and listening test before and after the eight weeks, and students and teachers also shared their opinions through a survey and interviews. The group that used the AI app showed bigger improvement in speaking, especially in fluency and confidence, than the group that studied without it. The paper explains these results and gives simple suggestions for using AI tools in English lessons in Uzbek schools.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, personalized learning, communicative competence, English language teaching, secondary school, Uzbekistan.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, English teaching in Uzbekistan has changed a lot. The Ministry of Public Education (2021) set clear goals for schools to teach English so that students can actually communicate, not only pass grammar tests. But in real classrooms, this goal is hard to reach. Classes are often big, students do not get much chance to speak, and teachers cannot check every student’s progress by themselves. Because of this, many students leave school knowing grammar rules but still feeling shy or unsure when they need to speak in English.

At the same time, artificial intelligence is becoming part of everyday life, including education.

AI-assisted personalized learning refers to the use of artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and Quizlet AI to provide personalized learning activities, immediate feedback, and adaptive tasks according to each student’s needs, proficiency level, and learning pace.

These programs can let a student practice speaking, get instant correction, and repeat difficult parts as many times as needed. This kind of practice is very hard to give to every student inside a normal classroom, so AI tools may be a useful way to support English learning in Uzbek secondary schools.

Communicative competence is supposed to be the main goal of English lessons, but many students still cannot speak English comfortably even after years of study. Teachers usually focus more on grammar and reading because they do not have time to work on speaking with every student. AI tools could help solve this problem, but there is not much research about how well these tools actually work in Uzbek schools. This study tries to fill that gap.

The aim of this study is to check how AI-assisted personalized learning affects the communicative competence of secondary school students studying English in Uzbekistan. The objectives are:

To compare speaking and listening results of students before and after using an AI-assisted learning app.

To compare the results of students who used the AI app with students who studied in the usual way.

To find out which parts of the AI app students and teachers think are the most useful for speaking practice.

To give simple recommendations for using AI tools in English lessons in Uzbek schools.

1. Does AI-assisted personalized learning improve students’ communicative competence more than usual teaching methods?

2. Which features of the AI app do students and teachers find most helpful for speaking and listening?

3. What problems appear when AI tools are used in the English classroom?

This study can be useful for teachers, school leaders, and people who plan the English curriculum in Uzbekistan. It shows real information about how AI tools work with real students, not just theory. Teachers can use these results to decide if and how they want to use AI apps together with their normal lessons.

This study only looked at two schools and lasted eight weeks, so the results cannot be applied to all schools in the country. The study focused mainly on speaking and listening skills. A longer study with more schools would give a fuller picture.

Chomsky (1965) first separated language knowledge into two parts: competence, which means knowing the rules of a language, and performance, which means actually using the language. Later, Hymes (1972) said that this was not enough, because knowing grammar rules does not mean a person can use the language correctly in real situations. Hymes called the ability to use language properly in different situations 'communicative competence'. Canale and Swain (1980) developed this idea further and said that communicative competence includes several parts: knowing grammar, knowing how to speak politely and correctly in different situations, knowing how to connect ideas in a conversation, and knowing how to fix communication problems when they happen. These ideas are the basis of communicative language teaching used in Uzbek schools today.

Personalized learning means teaching that fits each student’s own needs, pace, and level, instead of teaching all students the same way at the same speed. This idea is not new, but it is difficult for one teacher to give personal attention to every student in a large class. Krashen (1982) explained that learners understand language better when they feel relaxed and not stressed, an idea known as the affective filter. A personalized approach can lower this stress because a student can practice alone, make mistakes, and try again without feeling embarrassed in front of classmates.

The use of computers in language learning is not a new idea. Warschauer and Healey (1998) described how computer-assisted language learning started with simple grammar and vocabulary exercises and slowly grew into more interactive tools. Later, mobile phones became common learning tools too. Kukulska-Hulme (2013) explained that mobile-assisted language learning let students practice English anywhere, not only in the classroom, which gave them many more chances to use the language.

Artificial intelligence took this idea further. Godwin-Jones (2017) noted that smartphone apps with AI features can give learners almost unlimited chances to practice speaking and listening outside class time, with instant feedback on pronunciation and grammar. Holmes, Bialik and Fadel (2019) explained that AI in education generally includes systems that can adjust to a student’s level, track their progress, and recommend the right tasks for them. These features make AI tools different from older computer programs, because they can change and adapt while the student is using them, not just follow a fixed plan.

Zhang and Zou (2022) reviewed many studies about AI in language education and found that most research reports good results for vocabulary learning, pronunciation, and student motivation. However, they also noticed that most of these studies were done in universities or private language centers in wealthy countries, and very few looked at public secondary schools, especially in Central Asia. This study tries to add new information from the Uzbek school context, focusing directly on speaking and listening as parts of communicative competence.

This study used a mixed-methods design. It combined a quantitative comparison of test scores before and after the study with qualitative information from a survey and interviews. This combination helps to show not only how much students improved, but also why they improved.

64 ninth-grade students, aged 14 to 15, from two secondary schools took part in the study. They were divided into two groups: an experimental group of 32 students who used the AI app, and a control group of 32 students who studied in the usual way. Both groups had similar English levels at the start, confirmed by a placement test, and were taught by teachers with similar experience.

Three tools were used to collect information:

A speaking and listening test, given before and after the eight weeks, checking fluency, understanding, and pronunciation.

A short survey for students about their opinion of the AI app and their confidence in speaking English.

Short interviews with four teachers about the changes they saw in their students and any problems they faced.

Before the study began, both groups took the same speaking and listening test. For eight weeks, the experimental group used ChatGPT for interactive speaking practice, Grammarly for writing correction, and Quizlet AI for personalized vocabulary learning for about 20 minutes three times a week in addition to regular English lessons. These AI tools provided immediate feedback, corrected students’ mistakes, and adapted learning activities according to each learner’s progress.

The control group spent the same amount of extra time on speaking activities led only by the teacher, without the app. After eight weeks, both groups took the test again, and then completed the survey and interviews.

Test scores were compared using simple averages, first to see how much each group improved on its own, and then to compare the two groups with each other. Survey answers were summarized with basic percentages, and interview answers were grouped into common

themes about student progress and classroom challenges.

At the start, the average score of the experimental group (54.2) and the control group (53.8) were almost the same, so the two groups began at a similar level. After eight weeks, the experimental group’s average score rose to 71.6, while the control group’s average score rose only to 60.3. The biggest improvement in the experimental group was in speaking fluency and confidence, followed by pronunciation. Listening scores also improved, but by a smaller amount.

Most students in the experimental group said they liked using the AI app. Many said they felt less nervous speaking to the app than speaking in front of classmates, and this helped them practice more. Several students said the quick feedback helped them notice and fix their pronunciation mistakes faster than before. A few students said the app was difficult to use at first or had small technical problems, and some still preferred speaking with a real person for harder conversations.

All four teachers said they noticed more students willing to speak up in class after the eight weeks. They said some students who used to stay quiet became more active because they had already practiced speaking privately with the app. Teachers also mentioned some problems, such as a few students not having a good phone or internet connection, and a need for more training for teachers to use the app well in lessons.

The results show that AI-assisted personalized learning can help secondary school students in Uzbekistan improve their communicative competence, especially their speaking fluency and confidence. This matches what Godwin-Jones (2017) and Holmes, Bialik and Fadel (2019) said about AI tools giving learners more chances to practice and get instant feedback. The bigger improvement in speaking compared to listening may be because the app focused more on speaking practice than listening practice.

The survey and interview answers help explain why these improvements happened. Both students and teachers said that practicing alone with the app felt less stressful than speaking in front of the whole class. This supports Krashen’s (1982) idea that learners do better when they feel relaxed and not afraid of making mistakes. At the same time, the

problems teachers mentioned, such as unequal access to phones and the need for teacher training, show that using AI tools well needs more than just good technology.

Furthermore, AI-assisted personalized learning encouraged students to become more independent learners because they could practice English outside the classroom at their own pace. However, successful implementation requires reliable internet access, digital devices, and teacher training to maximize its educational benefits. Teachers said the app was good for building basic confidence and correcting small mistakes, but real classroom conversation was still needed for more complex communication. This means that AI tools and normal teaching should be used together, matching what Kukulska-Hulme (2013) and Warschauer and Healey (1998) suggested about technology supporting, not replacing, classroom learning.

This study aimed to find out if AI-assisted personalized learning helps secondary school students in Uzbekistan improve their communicative competence in English. The results show that students who used the AI app improved their speaking fluency, confidence, and pronunciation more than students who studied without it. These improvements seem to come from the app’s ability to give each student their own pace of practice and quick feedback, something that is difficult to do for every student in a normal classroom.

These results suggest that AI tools can be a helpful addition to English lessons in secondary schools, especially for speaking practice. However, the study also shows that AI tools work best together with the teacher, not instead of the teacher. Schools that want to use AI tools need to think about equal access to devices and give teachers proper training.

Future studies should run for a longer time to see if the improvements last, and should include more schools, both in cities and villages. It would also be useful to compare different AI apps to see which features help communicative competence the most, and to study how teacher training affects the success of these tools.

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