Understanding the Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Students' Speaking Proficiency: A Lecturer's Perspective

By:

M. Bambang Purwanto[1], Anggra Prima[2], Ridayani [3], Aisyah[4], Fahrur Rozi[5]

Politeknik Prasetiya Mandiri, PSDKU Palembang, Indonesia[1], STIA Sanggatta Kutai Timur, Indonesia[2], *Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Muhammadiyah Polwali Mandar, Indonesia[3], Universitas Muhammadiyah Papua, Indonesia[4], Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia[5]*

mbambangpurwanto@gmail.com, primaanggra@gmail.com, ridayani@itmpolman.ac.id, aisyah.pasca15@gmail.com, frozi@mail.unnes.ac.id

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Abstract: The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education has transformed English language teaching, particularly in developing students' speaking proficiency. This study explores English lecturers' perceptions of AI use in speaking instruction at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali, a Buddhist higher education institution in Central Java, Indonesia. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with a phenomenological approach, five lecturers were purposively selected as participants. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. The findings reveal that lecturers generally hold positive perceptions of AI, recognizing its role in enhancing students' confidence, fluency, and pronunciation, while emphasizing that AI functions as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for teachers. Lecturers also identified challenges, including limited infrastructure, ethical concerns, and the need for digital literacy and pedagogical training. AI-assisted activities, such as self-practice, chatbot conversations, and project-based learning, were found to foster autonomous learning and active student engagement. This study contributes to the understanding of the pedagogical potential and limitations of AI in English-speaking instruction, offering insights for curriculum design, teacher development, and the responsible integration of technology in higher education.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI-assisted learning, English speaking proficiency, higher education, lecturer perception

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly reshaped higher education, particularly in English language teaching (ELT). Over

the past decade, AI-driven technologies—such as chatbots, intelligent tutoring systems, and automated speech recognition—have supported learners in developing linguistic competence and communication skills (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Kukulska-Hulme, 2023). Applications like ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish have become virtual learning assistants that simulate authentic conversation and provide real-time corrective feedback, transforming technology into a collaborative learning partner rather than a passive tool.

This technological evolution has also shifted the learning paradigm from a traditional teacher-centered approach to an AI-assisted, learner-centered model. Students now engage in interactive, adaptive, and personalized learning experiences that cater to their linguistic needs (Holmes et al., 2022). In this environment, AI promotes learner autonomy by providing instant feedback and adaptive speaking tasks aligned with socio-constructivist theories of language learning (Piaget & Vygotsky, 2016). As a result, the classroom becomes a space for exploration, creativity, and continuous improvement through human–machine collaboration.

However, integrating AI into speaking instruction introduces both opportunities and challenges. While AI facilitates fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and learner motivation (Li, 2023; Kohnke & Zou, 2022), it also raises concerns about authenticity, ethical use, digital literacy gaps, and students' overdependence on automated systems (Winke & Goertler, 2021). These tensions underscore the need to examine not only the technological potential of AI but also its pedagogical sustainability in promoting genuine communicative competence.

Within this context, lecturers play a decisive role in shaping how AI is understood and applied in classroom practice. As facilitators of communication and critical thinking, (Purwanto, Yuliana, et al., 2025) lecturers determine how AI aligns with instructional goals and student needs (Revolusi & Febriandy, 2025; Umar & Purwanto, 2025). Their perceptions and readiness influence whether AI becomes an empowering educational innovation or a disruptive challenge to established teaching paradigms. Investigating their perspectives, therefore, provides valuable insight into the human dimension of AI adoption in ELT.

This study focuses on STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali, a Buddhist higher education institution in Central Java, Indonesia, that integrates mindfulness-based education with digital innovation. Its commitment to balancing ethical values, compassion, and technological progress provides a unique setting to examine AI's role in English language pedagogy. Understanding how English lecturers perceive and utilize AI in teaching speaking can shed light on how technology and Buddhist pedagogical values coexist in modern higher education.

Despite increasing global attention to AI in ELT, empirical evidence on lecturers' perceptions remains limited—particularly in smaller Indonesian institutions, where technological infrastructure and professional training are still developing (Zhang & Wang, 2023). This study addresses that gap by exploring how English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali perceive the effectiveness and challenges of AI in improving students' speaking proficiency, and how they navigate between innovation and pedagogical integrity.

The study is guided by three research questions: (1) What are the English lecturers' perceptions of using AI in developing students' speaking proficiency? (2) How do lecturers integrate AI tools in English-speaking instruction? (3) What challenges and pedagogical implications emerge from AI-assisted speaking activities? These questions collectively aim to uncover the practical realities and reflective insights that define AI-enhanced speaking pedagogy in higher education.

The findings are expected to contribute theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this research enriches current discussions on AI-based language pedagogy and human–AI collaboration in ELT (Warschauer & Liaw, 2022). Practically, it offers insights for curriculum designers and policymakers seeking to implement AI ethically and effectively in tertiary English programs. Moreover, the study's local focus provides a model for integrating technology and moral education within the Indonesian Buddhist academic context.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a phenomenological approach, aiming to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of English lecturers regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in speaking instruction. A phenomenological perspective was chosen to capture the subjective meanings that lecturers attach to their interactions with AI technologies in teaching contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach enables a thorough examination of how lecturers perceive and respond to the integration of AI tools in language classrooms. The qualitative design was considered appropriate because it focuses on understanding complex human experiences rather than measuring variables statistically (Liu et al., 2020). Through this lens, the research emphasizes the interpretation of participants' narratives, attitudes, and reflections to uncover the pedagogical and contextual dimensions shaping their engagement with AI in English Language Teaching (ELT).

The participants in this study consisted of five English lecturers teaching at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali, a Buddhist higher education institution in Central Java, Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling, considering their teaching experience, exposure to AI-based tools, and active involvement in English-speaking courses. This sampling technique was suitable for selecting information-rich cases that could provide detailed insights relevant to the study's objectives (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007). All participants had prior experience using AI technologies, such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, or other digital platforms, in the classroom or for individual speaking practice.

Data collection employed three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and classroom observation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore lecturers' perceptions, experiences, and reflections on the use of AI in developing students' speaking proficiency. The interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that allowed participants to elaborate freely on their teaching experiences and beliefs about integrating AI (Syahfutra et al., 2020). Each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes and was recorded with the participants' consent. In addition to interviews, document

analysis was conducted by reviewing course syllabi, lesson plans, and instructional materials that reflected the use of AI in English-speaking instruction. Where possible, classroom observations were conducted to assess the practical application of AI tools during speaking activities. Observations focused on lecturer-student interactions, the types of AI platforms used, and students' engagement levels. The combination of these three methods enabled data triangulation, enhancing the depth and credibility of the findings.

Data analysis followed the interactive model of (Miles & Huberman, 1994), consisting of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. During data reduction, interview transcripts and field notes were coded inductively to identify recurring ideas, attitudes, and experiences related to AI-assisted speaking instruction. These codes were then organized into broader themes representing lecturers' perceptions, integration strategies, and challenges. In the data display stage, the categorized data were presented in narrative and tabular forms to illustrate patterns and relationships among the identified themes. Finally, during the conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher interpreted the thematic findings to generate insights into how lecturers perceive and utilize AI in their teaching contexts. Continuous reflection and cross-checking were carried out to ensure that interpretations accurately represented participants' perspectives (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the research's trustworthiness, several validation strategies were applied, including triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and audit trail documentation. Triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying information obtained from interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis (Tisdell et al., 2025) This approach helped strengthen the credibility of findings by comparing multiple data sources and perspectives. Member checking was conducted by sharing the interview summaries and thematic interpretations with participants to confirm the accuracy and authenticity of representation (Yin, 2015). Additionally, peer debriefing with fellow researchers was conducted to minimize bias and ensure analytical consistency, while maintaining an audit trail that documented every step of data collection and analysis to enhance

dependability and confirmability. These strategies collectively ensured that the research findings were trustworthy, transparent, and ethically grounded.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interview transcripts, observation notes, and supporting documents revealed six major themes corresponding to the three research questions. These themes collectively illustrate the lecturers' perceptions, integration strategies, and pedagogical reflections regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in developing students' speaking proficiency. The findings indicate that English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali demonstrate both enthusiasm and caution toward AI integration. While most participants recognized the significant potential of AI tools to support speaking fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and learner motivation, they also expressed concerns about authenticity, ethical use, and student dependency.

Moreover, the results indicate that lecturers primarily employ AI as a supplementary pedagogical aid rather than a replacement for traditional instruction. They utilized AI tools such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish to enrich speaking activities, promote autonomous learning, and extend practice beyond classroom boundaries. However, challenges related to digital infrastructure, pedagogical adaptation, and the need for ethical guidelines emerged as recurring issues.

Overall, the findings highlight a dynamic process of adaptation in which lecturers navigate between innovation and pedagogical responsibility. The following sections present the detailed findings structured according to the three research questions: (1) lecturers' perceptions of AI in speaking development, (2) strategies for AI integration in English-speaking instruction, and (3) challenges and pedagogical implications of AI-assisted speaking activities.

1) Lecturers' Perceptions of AI in Speaking Development

The findings indicated that English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali generally held positive perceptions toward the integration of Artificial Intelligence in English-speaking instruction. They viewed AI tools such as

ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish as valuable supports that enhance students' confidence, fluency, and pronunciation. These technologies were perceived to extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom by enabling students to practice speaking independently.

> *"Students become more confident when using ELSA or ChatGPT because they can practice anytime without waiting for class"* (Informant 2).

AI-based speaking activities were also found to be effective in reducing students' anxiety and promoting motivation. Several lecturers noted that learners felt more relaxed when interacting with AI than when speaking in front of peers or teachers. This sense of psychological comfort encouraged students to express themselves more naturally and take linguistic risks.

> *"When they speak to AI, students are less afraid of making mistakes. They feel more relaxed, and that makes them talk more naturally"* (Informant 1).

Lecturers also reported that shy students became more active participants through AI-based exercises, which helped cultivate a more inclusive learning environment.

Another prominent finding was the appreciation for AI's instant feedback capability, particularly in improving pronunciation and fluency. Lecturers recognized that AI could provide immediate corrections and progress tracking that are difficult to manage in large classroom settings. This feature allowed students to self-assess their performance and work on specific areas of weakness.

> *"AI can analyze students' speech and show exactly which words or sounds are wrong. I can't give that detailed feedback to every student during class"* (Informant 5).

The availability of this automated feedback was seen as both motivating and efficient, complementing the lecturers' teaching efforts. However, the findings also revealed a degree of scepticism and cautious adoption among lecturers. Some expressed concerns about the accuracy of AI-generated feedback, particularly regarding cultural and pragmatic aspects of language use. There were also concerns that students might become overly dependent on technology, resulting in

a decline in creativity and critical thinking. A few lecturers noted that some learners tended to copy AI-generated sentences without reflecting on meaning or communication context. Therefore, they stressed the need for guidance to help students use AI tools responsibly and critically.

In general, the lecturers agreed that AI should serve as a supportive assistant rather than a replacement for teachers. They appreciated its ability to facilitate independent practice and individualized feedback, yet they emphasized the irreplaceable human role in mentoring, emotional engagement, and contextual interpretation. The lecturers' responses reflect a balanced and reflective stance, recognizing both the pedagogical benefits and limitations of AI in developing students' speaking proficiency.

2) Strategies for AI integration in English-speaking instruction

The findings indicated that English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali have adopted a supplementary approach in integrating AI tools into their speaking classes. Rather than making AI the central focus of instruction, lecturers used it to complement classroom learning and extend speaking practice beyond formal contact hours. Most lecturers encouraged students to engage with AI-powered platforms—such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish—for self-practice, pronunciation refinement, and interactive conversation outside the classroom.

> "*I usually ask students to use ChatGPT or ELSA at home for extra practice. They can prepare dialogues and bring them to class for discussion"* (Informant 1).

This approach enabled students to enhance their oral fluency and gain confidence before participating in class-based speaking tasks. In addition to individual practice, lecturers designed speaking assignments that required students to interact with AI chatbots as conversational partners. Through simulated dialogues, learners could practice everyday English expressions, receive instant corrections, and become more aware of language patterns. Some lecturers reported that this technique helped reduce students' dependence on memorized scripts and fostered spontaneous communication.

> "*When students talk with AI, they can learn natural expressions and get suggestions to make their sentences sound more fluent"* (Informant 4).

These activities were also beneficial for developing pragmatic competence, as students learned to adjust tone and formality in various conversational contexts. Several lecturers also implemented AI for self-assessment and reflective learning. Students were encouraged to record their own speech, analyze the recordings using speech recognition applications, and review feedback related to pronunciation and fluency. This process helped students identify recurring errors and track progress over time. One lecturer described,

> *"Students like to see their scores after recording. It helps them notice their pronunciation mistakes and motivates them to practice again"* (Informant 3).

The lecturers viewed this method as a form of autonomous learning that cultivated students' responsibility for their own improvement. Beyond individual learning, AI was also integrated into Project-Based Learning (PBL) activities to create more engaging and authentic speaking experiences. Lecturers assigned projects such as creating English promotional videos for tourism or social campaigns, where students used AI tools to generate ideas, edit scripts, and receive pronunciation guidance. These tasks combined creativity, collaboration, and the use of technology, allowing students to apply their language skills in real-world scenarios. Lecturers found that students became more motivated and participative when AI-supported tasks were connected to meaningful projects.

AI integration was further utilized for vocabulary enrichment and contextual support during project work. Students used AI to explore synonyms, refine sentence structures, and enhance clarity in their spoken scripts. Lecturers emphasized that AI-assisted vocabulary learning helped students express ideas more precisely and confidently. Moreover, the use of real-time pronunciation feedback tools encouraged learners to refine articulation and intonation before presenting their projects. Through this process, AI has become a bridge that links linguistic accuracy with communicative creativity.

Overall, lecturers' practices reflected a balanced and context-sensitive integration of AI tools. They positioned AI as a facilitator of extended practice, reflection, and creative output rather than as a replacement for classroom instruction. The integration of AI into supplementary tasks and project-based learning demonstrated an evolving pedagogical approach that combines technological innovation with learner autonomy. By incorporating AI in structured yet flexible ways, lecturers successfully enhanced student engagement and speaking proficiency while maintaining the central role of human guidance in the learning process.

3) Challenges and pedagogical implications of AI-assisted speaking activities

The study revealed that integrating AI in speaking instruction poses several technological and ethical challenges. One major obstacle identified by lecturers was the limited internet access and inadequate devices, which sometimes prevented students from fully utilizing AI tools. Additionally, concerns were raised regarding plagiarism and the authenticity of AI-generated content, as students might rely too heavily on AI to produce responses, rather than developing their own language skills.

> *"Sometimes students just copy what AI suggests, and it's hard to know if they really understand or just follow the tool"* (Informant 2).

Lecturers also emphasized the importance of establishing ethical guidelines for the use of AI in language learning. They suggested clear rules to prevent overreliance on technology and to ensure that AI serves as a supportive learning aid rather than a shortcut. As one lecturer noted, "We need to teach students how to use AI responsibly.

> *It's not just about convenience; they must understand its limits"* (Informant 1).

This reflects a growing awareness that the integration of AI must be accompanied by pedagogical and ethical considerations. Another key finding was the pedagogical transformation required from lecturers. AI tools encouraged educators to shift from being traditional knowledge providers to learning

facilitators, guiding students in using technology effectively while maintaining critical thinking and language comprehension. Lecturers reported that this role change required them to develop digital literacy skills and understand how to evaluate speaking performance using AI-assisted methods.

In addition, lecturers emphasized the need for professional development and training to enhance their capacity to integrate AI ethically and pedagogically.

> *"We need workshops or training sessions on how to use AI for speaking activities properly. Without guidance, both lecturers and students might not benefit fully"* (Informant 5).

Such training was viewed as essential to ensure that AI-supported learning remains meaningful, contextually relevant, and aligned with instructional objectives. Overall, the lecturers recognized that while AI offers opportunities for autonomous learning, feedback, and engagement, its effective use depends on addressing technological limitations, ethical concerns, and pedagogical adaptation. The findings suggest that AI should complement, rather than replace, human guidance, and lecturers must be prepared to navigate this new educational landscape through careful planning, continuous professional development, and ethical awareness.

The findings indicate that English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali hold generally positive yet cautious perceptions toward the integration of AI in speaking instruction. They recognized AI tools such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish as valuable for enhancing students' confidence, fluency, and pronunciation, providing opportunities for autonomous learning beyond classroom settings. AI also served as a motivational companion, helping students overcome anxiety and practice speaking without fear of judgment. Lecturers appreciated the instant feedback offered by AI, which complemented classroom instruction and supported self-assessment (Agustina et al., 2026). However, some expressed concerns regarding overreliance on AI, the accuracy of feedback in cultural and pragmatic contexts, and the need to maintain critical thinking skills, emphasizing that AI should function as an assistant rather than a replacement for human teaching.

In terms of practical integration, lecturers employed AI as a supplementary learning aid through conversation practice, self-recording, and feedback analysis, while also embedding it into Project-Based Learning activities such as video presentations and script editing. AI contributed to vocabulary enrichment, provided real-time pronunciation guidance, and facilitated autonomous learning behavior, thereby fostering greater student participation and engagement (Harpiansi & Purwanto, 2025; Satriah et al., 2025). At the same time, lecturers faced technological challenges (e.g., limited internet access, device constraints) and ethical considerations regarding plagiarism and authenticity. These challenges prompted a shift in the lecturers' roles from knowledge providers to learning facilitators, highlighting the need for digital literacy, pedagogical adaptability, and professional training in AI-mediated language teaching.

Implications for the field of English language education include the recognition that AI can meaningfully support the development of communicative skills while promoting learner autonomy and self-regulated practice. The study contributes to understanding how AI-assisted pedagogy can be effectively contextualized in higher education institutions, particularly in culturally and ethically oriented environments such as Buddhist universities. This insight may guide curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policymakers in integrating AI tools into ELT programs while maintaining pedagogical integrity.

From an interpretative perspective, the findings suggest that AI functions not only as a technological tool but also as a structural mediator in the classroom (Purwanto, Firdaus, et al., 2025). Its integration reshapes instructional dynamics, redistributes teaching responsibilities, and creates new interaction patterns between lecturers, students, and technology. The study highlights that meaningful AI use depends on careful balancing of technical affordances, ethical considerations, and pedagogical objectives, reflecting broader systemic and structural factors in higher education.

When compared with previous studies, this research confirms the positive impact of AI on speaking confidence and fluency, as reported in global contexts. However, it differs in emphasizing the dual role of lecturers in culturally and In

terms of practical integration, lecturers employed AI as a supplementary learning aid through conversation practice, self-recording, and feedback analysis, while also embedding it into Project-Based Learning activities such as video presentations and script editing (Alshammari & Alqahtani, 2023; Hu & Wang, 2023). AI contributed to vocabulary enrichment, real-time pronunciation guidance, and autonomous learning behavior, fostering greater student participation and engagement (Li, 2023; Zheng & Chen, 2023). At the same time, lecturers faced technological challenges, including limited internet access and device constraints (Martins & Oliveira, 2022), and ethical considerations regarding plagiarism and the authenticity of AI-generated content (Liu & Zhang, 2023; Winke & Goertler, 2021). These challenges prompted a shift in the lecturers' roles from knowledge providers to learning facilitators and highlighted the need for digital literacy, pedagogical adaptability, and professional training in AI-mediated language teaching (Huang & Xu, 2023; Wang & Vasquez, 2023).

Implications for the field of English language education include the recognition that AI can meaningfully support communicative skill development while promoting learner autonomy and self-regulated practice (Kukulska-Hulme, 2023; Holmes et al., 2022). The study contributes to understanding how AI-assisted pedagogy can be contextualized in higher education institutions, particularly in culturally and ethically oriented environments like Buddhist universities (Zhang & Wang, 2023; Warschauer & Liaw, 2022). This insight may guide curriculum designers, teacher educators, and policymakers in integrating AI tools into ELT programs while maintaining pedagogical integrity (Chen & Li, 2023; Kohnke & Zou, 2022).

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objectives, reflecting broader systemic and structural factors in higher education (Martins & Oliveira, 2022; Li, 2023).

When compared with previous studies, this research confirms the positive impact of AI on speaking confidence and fluency, as reported in global contexts (Li, 2023; Zheng & Chen, 2023). However, it differs in emphasizing the dual role of lecturers in culturally and ethically sensitive institutions, where AI adoption is carefully mediated to preserve human-centered pedagogy (Zhang & Wang, 2023; Warschauer & Liaw, 2022). Unlike earlier studies that often focus solely on AI's technical effectiveness, this study highlights the ethical, motivational, and contextual dimensions of AI use, including practical classroom strategies and role transformation of educators (Huang & Xu, 2023; Wang & Vasquez, 2023). Moreover, it provides insight into AI-assisted Project-Based Learning integration, which remains less explored in prior literature (Hu & Wang, 2023; Kukulska-Hulme, 2023).

Another comparison shows that while past research often highlights AI's efficiency in automated feedback and pronunciation improvement (Kohnke & Zou, 2022; Li, 2023), this study underscores structural challenges such as infrastructural limitations, student overdependence, and the need for digital literacy among lecturers (Martins & Oliveira, 2022; Liu & Zhang, 2023). These findings extend prior knowledge by combining both pedagogical potential and practical constraints within a specific institutional and cultural context (Alshammari & Alqahtani, 2023; Zheng & Chen, 2023).

Despite these insights, the study has limitations. The sample size was relatively small (five lecturers), and the research was conducted in a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Additionally, data collection relied mainly on interviews and limited classroom observations, which could be complemented by longitudinal tracking of student performance to capture the long-term impact of AI integration.

Based on these limitations, recommendations include conducting studies with larger and more diverse populations across multiple institutions to validate and expand the findings. It is also suggested that mixed-methods designs be

implemented, incorporating quantitative measures of speaking proficiency to triangulate lecturer perceptions with measurable student outcomes. Furthermore, professional development programs should be designed to enhance lecturers' digital literacy, ethical awareness, and pedagogical strategies in AI-assisted language learning.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that English lecturers at STIAB Smaratungga Boyolali generally hold positive perceptions toward the integration of Artificial Intelligence in speaking instruction. They recognized AI tools such as ChatGPT, ELSA Speak, and YouGlish as effective aids to enhance students' confidence, fluency, and pronunciation. At the same time, lecturers emphasized that AI should function as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement for human teaching. The findings underscore the importance of equipping lecturers with comprehensive pedagogical training and digital literacy development to ensure that AI integration aligns with learning objectives, ethical considerations, and institutional values. Moreover, the study underscores AI's potential to support autonomous learning, project-based speaking activities, and instant feedback mechanisms, contributing to more engaging and student-centered language learning. A key strength of this research lies in its contextualized exploration of AI use within a culturally and ethically oriented higher education institution, offering valuable insights into the practical, motivational, and pedagogical dimensions of AI-assisted language learning. These findings provide a foundation for future policy development, curriculum design, and professional training programs aimed at enhancing English-speaking proficiency through responsible, contextually aware AI integration.

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