

## An Investigation into Students' Perception of Using Call Annie as a Virtual Conversational Partner

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### ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** AI, chatbot, students' perception, virtual conversational partner

There is no doubt that using AI tools to learn a foreign language has become more common in recent years. This study aims to explore students' perception of using Call Annie – an AI-powered tool – to practice speaking regularly, as part of their homework to find out their perceived advantages and disadvantages after conversing with the application. This research project employed 85 English majors at a university for the investigation, in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via questionnaires and interviews to observe their interactions with the Call Annie chatbot for homework assignments as conversational partners for three weeks. After the period, students were given surveys to record their perception, and after their final speaking test, a focus group interview was held with 3 students. Findings show students' willingness and confidence to utilize Call Annie in the future for their speaking skills, as well as their positive attitudes. However, the data also shows that students were worried about using the tool due to concerns about authenticity and language content. In the future, AI chatbots may be used as conversational partners, which could enable teachers to take more active roles in individualized approaches to teaching speaking.

### Introduction

In this day and age, speaking has been recognized as the most important skill for English learners around the world, despite the fact there have been several studies on the optimal method to master speaking in the world of second language learning and teaching (Brown, 1994; Tran & Tham, 2015). Mahmudin (2023) pointed out a number of psychological issues that students have encountered, which might be the causes for students' unwillingness to talk in class. "shyness" or "lack of confidence" are one of the dilemma that students in some

countries, including Vietnam, are facing. This, in turn, has led to the emergence of AI-powered tools, or virtual speaking partners such as Call Annie, to fulfill the increasing need to practice speaking outside the classroom.

Studies by Shafiee (2024), Hsu et al. (2023) and Jeon (2022) have indicated students' positive attitudes towards the use of AI chatbots, with a reduced level of anxiety and enhanced degree of willingness to communicate (WTC) as students were encouraged to converse freely with the virtual characters without the "fear of making mistakes" in large-size classrooms. AI-powered tools using models of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) have intrigued scholars worldwide with their applications in recent years. These models have employed advanced programming language to recognize patterns and generate new content like text, images, sounds, videos, which shed light on second language learning and teaching (Chan and Hu, 2023) with a range of tools regarding ChatGPT, Bard, and Dall-E. In light of the comprehension of complex prompts and human-like dialogues, there is growing research and interest in using GenAI across a variety of sectors. Therefore, research into chatbots would greatly help modern English classrooms where natural conversations with virtual native speakers could take place anywhere and anytime. According to Gupta et al. (2020), "chatbot" is a term that encompasses a wide range of formats and functions as it has been coined to be an application that replicates human contact via textual or auditory input. Therefore, concepts regarding "virtual tutor", "conversational agent" or "personal assistant" point to the fact that chatbots can differ in accordance with their multifunctional uses. Conversational AI, as depicted by de Barcelos Silva et al. (2020), was evolved in a more sophisticated approach thanks to the advent of Natural Language Understanding (NLU) and machine learning algorithms. A number of contemporary bots, or IPAs (Intelligent Personal Assistants) that have undergone deep training to assist humans bases on either spoken or written prompts could include Apple Siri and Amazon Alexa.

The potential role of AI and AI-driven chatbots in boosting students' academic engagement can be attributed to creating an interactive learning environment that motivates and engages students through precise, timely, and personalized feedback, contextualized responses, and a conversational interface (Almusaed, Almssad, Yitmen, & Homod, 2023). Furthermore, as Zou and Huang (2023) emphasized, AI-powered chatbots can pave the way for individualized and adaptable learning opportunities, motivating students to engage in the learning process regularly. Hsu et al. (2023) discovered that chatbots driven by artificial intelligence assisted lower language anxiety and boosted students' English willingness to communicate. Research by Bibauw et al. (2019) highlighted how important artificial intelligence is in offering immediate and tailored feedback—which is absolutely vital for language acquisition. In a study by Pham (2024), ChatGPT was perceived as an effective learning tool for students, particularly in providing academic resources and enhancing language skills, notwithstanding concerns about its potential to diminish students' independent thinking and reasoning abilities.

However, Holmes et al. (2022) underline the need of open data methods and strong security policies protecting student data. Moreover, the application of artificial intelligence in education has also experienced issues concerning access and fairness. Although artificial intelligence could democratize education by making high-quality information available to a larger audience,

students from underprivileged backgrounds could be left behind without access to the required technological infrastructure.

All in all, there has been a considerable amount of research into the linguistic and non-linguistic factors of AI-powered tools towards students' practicing skills. However, students' perceived benefits and drawbacks of using an AI tool and their emotional and behavioral engagement to practice speaking with a virtual character outside the class have been scant. Hence, to support teachers in English classrooms, this research has been conducted to identify the level of understanding about the potentials and concerns of Call Annie as a conversational partner among university students, mitigating the gap between their psychological factors and self-improvement in speaking English.

## Literature review

### *Definition of AI*

In 2023, Dasborough explained that "Generative AI" is a type of artificial intelligence that uses training data to make new, meaningful material, such as text, images, audio, and more. A lot of people are interested in this new technology. Models like DALL-E 2, GPT-4, and GitHub Copilot are changing the way we work and talk to each other. ChatGPT basically makes replies that sound like a person wrote them. This shows that it can write text as well as creative content like music and pictures. Generative AI might also use advanced machine learning methods, which could be very useful for creating multimodal material like text, audio, images, videos, and even three-dimensional models, which could have many uses. For example, ChatGPT is great at making text, while Midjourney and other tools are better at making images.

Although generative AI has brought about a lot of potential, it also springs up important ethical and social issues. Copyright violations in AI-made works of art, academic dishonesty like cheating and copying, and the risks that come with data privacy and security are all inevitable shortcomings, as stated by Gillotte (2019). Also, even though generative AI has a lot of promise, these problems need to be dealt with immediately to ensure it is used responsibly and ethically.

### *Definition of "Call Annie"*

"Call Annie" app, which emerged in 2024, has been deemed as a new approach to learn a language according to Sharma (2023) and Wan & Moorhouse (2024). To be more specific, it makes conversations outside classrooms possible for students, using generative AI and GPT-3.5, thereby allowing users to interact with a speech-based chatbot. This app creates authentic conversations by use of natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning. Learners can also make both video and audio calls. Users of iOS, Android, and the web can engage with the AI character Annie or another character with various qualities and speaking manner. This facilitates practicing language in a range of contexts. Pressing a button enables users to create a voice or video call. The artificial intelligence will then direct the conversation depending on user level of involvement. Apart from "learn" mode for practicing particular language abilities, users apply prompts and requests to ask for the character's feedback or response. Many of the features, meanwhile, only apply if payments are made (Wan & Moorhouse, 2024).

### *Virtual Conversational Partners (VCPs)*

Virtual conversational partners or VCPs have been programmed and promoted via software applications, in which verbal prompts are inserted through chatboxes or audio/video calls. They have been best known for their speech variations, physical movements associated with facial expressions or hand gestures, to mimic human in face-to-face interactions as their response for the initial contact from people, as shown in a study by de Barcelos Silva et al. (2020). Allouch, Azaria, & Azoulay (2021) also concluded that VCPs could potentially be speaking partners because they can work tirelessly with their accessibility and availability in educational institutes without native speakers. Liu et al. (2023) argue that AI-driven Virtual Conversational Partners (VCPs) have let people practice in an interactive and tailored way, changing their language acquisition. As for the adoption of VCPs in the learning of second languages, there are main benefits. Modern natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning approaches allow VCPs to give every student customized comments, corrections, and guidance in real time. VCPs offer a quiet, nonjudging space where students may express uninhibited, lowering the fear of using a language in a regular classroom. This is so since VCPs mirror how people genuinely use language and provide students with many real-life communication experience, therefore enhancing their immersion. Regarding the corrective feedback tool, Deng & Huang (2024) claimed that VCPs might assist students in their speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency in a range of social contexts, which is accessible to people with busy schedules.

### *Emotional engagement*

Emotional engagement has been termed and explored in a number of research studies hitherto. Zare et al. (2024) had regarded emotional engagement as factors associated with positive and negative emotions. Svalberg (2009) deduces that students with a high emotional attachment to learning are usually willing to make progress despite obstacles and more optimistic than those with negative emotions. A study by Pham et al. (2023) showed that students applying POE in their vocabulary practice expressed positive attitudes when they saw this as an enjoyable task, which boosted their interests and motivations in improving their lexical range. On the other hand, anxiety and boredom are considered negative emotions as they hinder students' participation in class. Brown (1994) described anxiety as "a feeling of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry" as students' success in learning would be maximized with the minimum level of anxiety and heightened positive attitudes.

### *Willingness to communicate (WTC)*

Gardner (1985) claimed that research on ready to communicate (WTC) in the framework of learning a second language concentrated on how mental elements like attitudes, objectives, and fear impact the process. Understanding why some language learners desire to speak a second language more than others while others may be scared or not want to need these things much. In terms of their communication demands with people in the target language, WTC in a second language depicts the possibility of someone speaking at any given moment (MacIntyre et al., 1998). This concept may vary based on the social contexts, the student's mood, and their perceived degree of fluency. Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) stated that WTC comprises many personal characteristics, like learning variables, that may significantly influence how

successfully someone learns and utilizes a second language. As Yashima (2002) noted, some students who know a lot of a language may have low WTC, which would restrict their opportunities to practice speaking and cause them to remain silent in class. Their lack of practice hinders their speaking development, reducing their proficiency. Yashima (2002) examined how attitudes, desire, psychological elements, and international views influence Japanese students's WTC in English. According to the findings, students with higher WTC level were more motivated to study English, leading to ease and confidence when using the language. WTC and the development of language competency are clearly linked. Learning languages more successfully may be facilitated by WTC improvement. By increasing their readiness to interact with others, these instruments may enable individuals to acquire a language more successfully and attain their linguistic objectives (MacIntyre et al., 1998; Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005; Yashima, 2002).

### *Results of previous studies*

#### *The advantages and disadvantages of applying AI chatbots into learning speaking*

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has recently become a useful tool for English education because of its many advantages that support the learning process. With a specific focus on ChatGPT in the learning aid functions, one project by Chan and Hu (2023) focused on college students' perception of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) technologies. Most of the 399 undergraduate and graduate students in this study conducted in Hong Kong who responded showed positive views of GenAI and recognized its possibilities for tailored learning, writing help, and research support. As John Biggs' 3P model suggests, pupils' perceptions significantly affect their learning process and topic of interest.

Moreover, individualized approach has been mostly seen in the adoption of Gen AI when it comes to catering different learning styles. According to Chan and Lee (2023), artificial intelligence initiatives like ChatGPT let students—especially those who speak English as their first language—generate ideas and receive comments on their work in an instant manner. The immediate engagement that improves the learning environment helps students to develop their skills at their own speed. Furthermore, tools like the Intelligent Essay Assessor *help the assessment process, providing* consistent scores on written tasks and quick comments (Crompton & Burke, 2023). GenAI may also *help* teachers *create* original and interesting materials for language projects, as shown in a study by Dehouche & Dehouche (2023).

Although there are advantages, generative AI being applied second language classrooms is not without challenges. Students may become too reliant on AI technology, and according to Warschauer et al. (2023), it would hinder their ability to develop their critical thinking and writing *abilities*. While AI-generated writing might be helpful, it usually lacks the human aspects and understanding that human writers provide, which cannot prolong readers' interest in the material. Ethical issues regarding academic honesty, computer prejudice, data privacy and authenticity are also concerns, which might exert doubts on their accuracy and justice (Peres et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2023). Research by Nguyen (2023) revealed that an overwhelming proportion of teachers and students were aware of the negative impacts of AI applications

related to plagiarism and policies towards the implementation of these tools ought to be regulated by the educators.

### *Students' perception about the future use of AI chatbots*

Students are optimistic yet cautious about AI chatbots in language learning. According to research, AI chatbots may improve engagement and customized practice in education. A large amount of research shows that students usually support AI chatbots in language learning contexts, notably due to their simplicity of use and innovation. Kim et al. (2021) found that South Korean EFL students liked AI chatbots for low-pressure English practice. Students improved their speaking abilities by using these chatbots to practice without worry of making blunders in front of others. Vietnam has also seen a variety of views of AI chatbots, notably in EFL instruction. Vietnamese undergraduate students were particularly interested in using AI voice chatbots for enhancing speaking abilities, according to Duong et al. (2024). Their research found that AI chatbots improved fluency and accuracy, indicating that language learners had a tendency to use the technology. Hoang et al. (2023) found that vocational students in Hanoi enjoyed applying AI chatbot apps, especially for pronunciation training because of the rapid and individualized feedback.

Despite these positive feedback, AI chatbots in education are still questionable. For instance, although students preferred the simple interface of use and innovation, they were wary of the chatbots' mistake correction and predictability (Belda-Medina et al., 2022). This cautious approach is consistent with Bibauw, François, and Desmet (2019), who found that dialogue-based Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) systems, including chatbots, depend on design features like error correction and dialogue management. Students also worry about AI chatbots' limited corrective feedback and discussion subjects, which might impair language development. Kim et al. (2021) reported that students liked practicing English but complained about the chatbots' inability to detect different pronunciations and offer thorough feedback. This shows that although AI chatbots are useful for practice and engagement, their present capabilities may not match students' and instructors' pedagogical objectives, especially in sophisticated language learning areas like critical thinking and conversational subtlety. Chatbots' mistake correction and conversational depth were criticized by Trang (2021). Duong et al. (2024) also stated that students complained about the AI chatbot's incapacity to identify Vietnamese names and limited chatting subjects. These issues suggest that although Vietnamese students are receptive to AI chatbots, some features need to be improved to make them more successful.

### *Summary of studies*

The advent of GenAI tools in the teaching and learning of English has shed light on the benefits and drawbacks of the degree to which the functions have been applied in classrooms. The research highlights significant benefits, including personalized learning experiences, reduced anxiety in practice environments, and enhanced accessibility for diverse learners (Chan et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Hoang et al., 2023). However, the studies also identify limitations, such as limited interactivity and engagement, technical challenges in understanding diverse linguistic inputs, and concerns about privacy and academic integrity (Belda-Medina et al., 2022;

Mageira et al., 2022; Nguyen (2023); Duong et al., 2024). Students generally perceive AI chatbots positively but remain cautious due to their current technological limitations.

### *Research gap*

All in all, there have been numerous studies on the advantages and disadvantages of employing AI chatbots for language acquisition in general. However, only a few studies have investigated students' perception of interactions with AI chatbots, such as "Call Annie." Additionally, there is a lack of research on whether students wish to continue employing AI programs for future speaking practice. This research aims to address these voids by undertaking a comprehensive examination of the advantages and disadvantages of "Call Annie" to improve communication skills. The research will also evaluate students' emotive investment in the speech-practicing app "Call Annie" and ascertain whether or not they intend to continue using it in the future.

### *Research Questions*

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Call Annie perceived by students?
2. What is students' perception about adopting Call Annie for their future use in speaking?

## **Methods**

### *Pedagogical Setting & Participants*

In order to address the research questions, the data for this study were gathered using participant interviews and questionnaires, which allowed researchers to see whether any issues were developing with the teaching and learning process. It also looked at how the students felt about using Call Annie, an AI Chatbot, as a virtual conversational partner. The primary setting for this research is Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City which is located in Ho Chi Minh City and currently is one of the reputable educational and training institutions in Vietnam. The population of this research consists of 85 English majors from two speaking classes at the Faculty of Foreign Language Department at Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City.

### *Design of the Study*

The main justification for using a mixed-method approach in this study is that it allows researchers to collect both qualitative and quantitative data, which may help them understand the problems more deeply. By using both strategies, researchers may triangulate their findings and gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the study subject.

The goal of using both quantitative and qualitative approaches is, according to Creswell & Creswell (2017), "to offset the weaknesses within one method with strengths of the other" (p. 196). Creswell and Clark (2017) note that this strategy enables the formulation of a superior degree of understanding in comparison to applying a single technique to individual research. Furthermore, they propose a set of basic characteristics that highlight significant elements of mixed methods research. They claim that researchers collect and analyze qualitative and

quantitative data systematically, rigorously, and deliberately that integrates the two kinds of data. The method used to compile this data will depend on the nature of the study and the researcher's philosophical perspective.

The quantitative technique works well for gathering a lot of data to make generalizations based on the findings (Babbie, 2020). However, qualitative research is useful in obtaining detailed information that may be used to produce recommendations for changes and a comprehensive knowledge of the assessment.

### *Data collection & analysis*

#### *Questionnaires*

This research used a validated instrument developed by Chan and Hu (2023) to survey students' perceptions of generative AI technologies, including ChatGPT, inside higher education. The present research examines the use of AI, particularly Call Annie, in assisting college students with English speaking practice. This aligns with the original study's emphasis on student interactions with AI technology, hence necessitating this modification. The objectives of both studies are to ascertain the impact of creative AI tools on student learning, emotional engagement, and the likelihood of their use in academic tasks. This research examines the use of AI technologies in authentic spoken environments.

There have been changes made in some of questions to address the specific challenges associated with using Call Annie for speaking practice. For example, the first statement, "I understand that generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT may not be capable of completely managing intricate tasks," was modified to "I understand that Call Annie may struggle to assess my verbal responses in complex speaking tasks accurately." The elements were modified to illustrate the specific advantages of using Call Annie for speech practice. The statement was revised from "I believe AI technologies such as ChatGPT can help me save time" to "I believe Call Annie can assist me in saving time by providing immediate feedback on my speaking practice." The phrase was modified from "I believe that AI technologies such as ChatGPT can provide me with personalized and immediate feedback and suggestions for my assignments" to "I believe that Call Annie can provide me with personalized and immediate feedback on my speaking practice," thereby clarifying the focus on speaking tasks. The first question, "The value of university education is diminished by the utilization of generative AI technologies like ChatGPT for assignment completion," has been revised to "The development of independent speaking skills may be hindered by the use of Call Annie for speaking practice." This addresses concerns around the use of AI. This alteration indicates a heightened concern over excessive dependence on AI technologies for the development of self-communication abilities.

#### *Interviews*

Semi-structured interviews were selected as one of the main study methodologies for a variety of reasons. First of all, they make it easier to ask open-ended questions, which may encourage respondents to offer thoughtful and in-depth responses. Compared to structured interviews, which follow a set list of questions and may provide more complicated and thorough information, semi-structured interviews allow for more flexible questioning tactics. Second, semi-structured interviews allow for the exploration of new ideas and themes that may emerge



throughout the interview process, while simultaneously providing a framework to guarantee consistency in the data collection process.

Qualitative research in the social sciences favors the use of semi-structured and unstructured interviews to collect data (Silverman, 2013). Qu and Dumay (2011) confirmed that although conducting interviews with individuals or groups of participants seemed like the primary advantage, what mattered most was convenience for both interviewers and interviewees. In order to obtain more in-depth viewpoints and attitudes to bolster the final conclusions on the applicability and dependability of Call Annie in the development of speaking ability, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with three pre-selected students.

### *Data analysis*

Before beginning the process, the researcher obtained authorization to conduct the study from the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City Foreign Language Department. The researcher also sent the Google form for the survey to the students she teaches. To reduce the variation between various interviewers, the researcher personally performed each of the three interviews online through the Zoom platform. Conveniently selecting the students suggested that the participants were selected according to how convenient it would be for the researcher to contact them.

This study combined data from questionnaires and interviews with qualitative and quantitative data for analysis. First, the researchers extracted the data from the surveys into an Excel document, which they then put into the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) application. Descriptive statistics were used to examine the frequency and proportion of each item (maximum, minimum, mean, standard deviation). After that, the data was arranged in tables for in-depth examination and assessment in written summaries.

The researchers were permitted to record on files during semi-structured interviews with the students. The responses given by the students during the interviews were transcribed, and a cross-case analysis was performed to show the overall patterns of the answers. Additionally, idea frequencies for each participant were computed and reported. The major concepts and shared viewpoints of the participants were reported using the data from the questionnaire, which was summarized, and the interview findings were written.

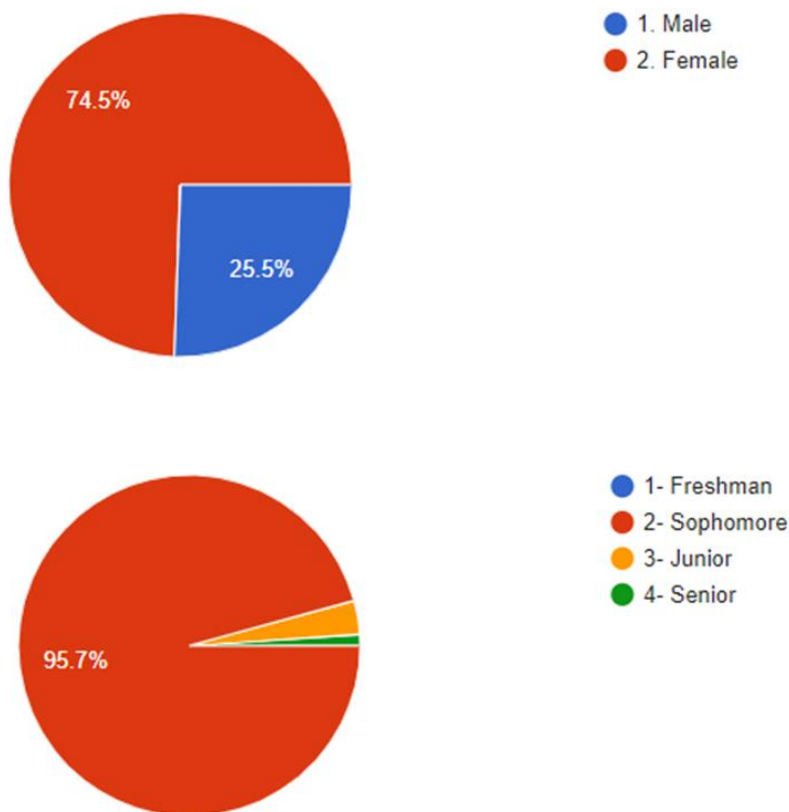
## **Results/Findings and discussion**

### *Findings*

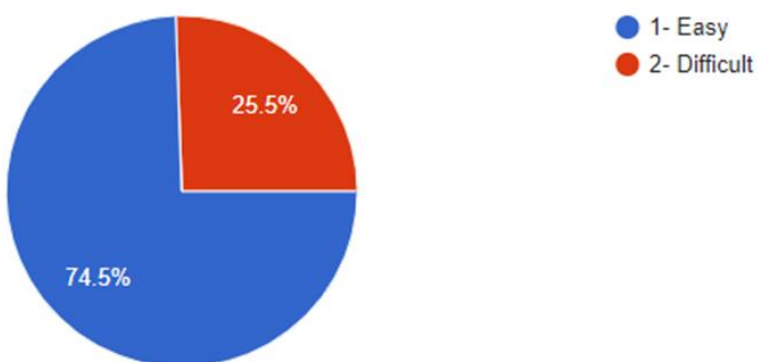
#### *Findings from surveys*

The data collected from the questionnaire was used to answer the first research question: What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Call Annie perceived by students?

#### **Demographic information of respondents**



Out of the 85 participants in this study, 74.5% were female students and 25.5% were male students. Furthermore, the majority of respondents were sophomores with 95.7%, while the remaining statistics belonged to students of three other years.



Moreover, 74.5% of the participants considered applying some technology to the learning process easy, whereas the rest (25.5%) indicated that this implementation was difficult. Furthermore, the students mainly self-evaluated their IT skills as Intermediate (64.9%) and Beginner (33%), whilst advanced level students just took up 2.1%.

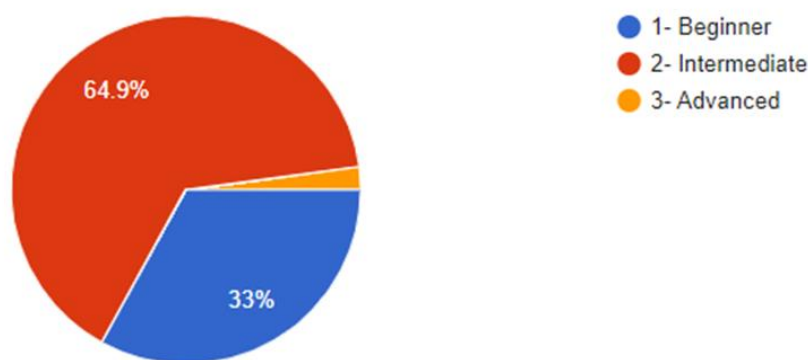


Table 1

Results of students' responses to the emotional engagement

The emotional engagement	N	Mean	SD
1. Call Annie helps me in reducing fear during speaking. (Anxiety)	85	3.83	.910
2. Call Annie helps me practice speaking in class. (Confidence)	85	3.88	.918
3. Call Annie forces me to practice speaking outside the class. (Confidence)	85	3.91	.889
4. Call Annie helps me to study confidently and personally. (Confidence)	85	3.89	.938
5. Call Annie gives me direct feedback on my speaking. (Confidence)	85	3.76	.921
6. I am happy to use Call Annie in speaking class. (Anxiety)	85	3.83	.936
7. This app can help me communicate with native speakers more easily. (Anxiety)	85	3.90	.867
8. I believe AI technologies such as Call Annie can provide me with unique insights and perspectives that I may not have thought of myself. (Confidence)	85	3.88	.878
9. I think AI technologies such as Call Annie are a great tool for shy students due to anonymity. (Confidence & Anxiety)	85	3.89	1.00

As illustrated in Table 1, most students shared positive agreement when it came to using Call Annie, with mean scores ranging from 3.76 to 3.91. With the greatest mean score ( $M= 3.91$ ,  $SD=0.889$ ) for the statement 'Call Annie forces me to practice speaking outside the class' and the lowest mean score ( $M= 3.76$ ,  $SD=0.921$ ) for the direct feedback given by Call Annie on students' speaking performance, indicating that while they highly appreciated the further practice of Call Annie beyond the class, it was sometimes unreliable when this platform provided direct feedback on the speaking performance of the students.

Furthermore, the data pertaining to the first item revealed a tendency that was somewhat comparable to that of the sixth and seventh items. To be more precise, the majority of participants ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=0.910$ ) stated that using Call Annie for their English learning activities reduced fear and anxiety, and at the same time increased their level of happiness ( $M=3.83$ ,  $SD=0.936$ ) and communication with native speakers ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=0.867$ ).

Finally, students who are timid can benefit greatly from AI technologies like Call Annie because of their anonymity ( $M=3.89$ ,  $SD=1.00$ ).

Table 2

Results of students' responses to the concerns about AI tasks

<b>The concerns about AI tasks</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
10. I am worried that generative AI technologies like Call Annie can generate factually inaccurate output.	85	4.18	.877
11. I am worried that generative AI technologies like Call Annie can show unfairness in their output.	85	3.68	.905
12. I am worried that generative AI technologies like Call Annie have limited emotional intelligence and empathy, which can lead to insensitive output.	85	3.47	.985

Descriptive data reveal that students' worries regarding GenAI were rather unfavorable. They gave the least favorable assessments towards the lack of emotional intelligence and empathy of generative AI systems such as Call Annie may produce output that is unpleasant (Mean=3.47;  $SD=0.985$ ), while the highest ratings were given to the fact that Call Annie and other generative AI systems were capable of producing output that was factually incorrect (Mean=4.18;  $SD=0.877$ ).

Table 3

Results of students' responses to the willingness to communicate using generative AI technologies

<b>The willingness to communicate using generative AI technologies</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
13. I can imagine using generative AI technologies like Call Annie in my English learning and the future.	85	2.90	.709
14. I believe generative AI technologies such as Call Annie can help me save time in practicing speaking.	85	3.00	.815
15. I think AI technologies such as Call Annie can provide me with personalized and immediate feedback and suggestions for my speaking practice.	85	3.37	.829
16. I think AI technologies such as Call Annie is a great tool to practice speaking as it is available 24/7.	85	3.17	1.028
17. I think Call Annie is a great application that can motivate me to speak English more.	85	3.72	.956

All things considered, the results point to students' favorable attitudes of GenAI technology. In both their future employment (Mean=2.90; SD=0.709) and speaking practices (Mean=3.00, SD=0.815), they would want to use GenAI technologies such as Call Annie. Students placed particular emphasis on its perceived value in offering tailored feedback (Mean=3.37; SD=0.829). They also perceived these technologies to be a great tool of practice since they provide a great source of motivation (Mean=3.72; SD=0.956) and are available 24/7 (Mean=3.17; SD=1.028).

#### *Findings from open-ended questions*

1/ What do you think about using Call Annie in practicing speaking skills?

2/ Do you have any recommendations for teachers to use this app in teaching English?

The response on "Call Annie" is quite positive, with over 75% of users praising its usefulness in developing English speaking abilities. Users continue to call the program "very useful" and "helpful," with many emphasizing how it improves speaking and listening skills. For example, one user stated that "It makes me feel more at ease communicating in English." The software remains particularly useful for introverts, with words like "great for introvert people to use this" focusing its suitable conditions for shy students. Furthermore, customers enjoy its ease, stating that it enables them to practice "whenever they want" without having to find the locations.

On the other hand, around 25% of customers reported technical problems. Comments such as "Annie sometimes can't hear me" and "she often does understand me but gives me incorrect information" highlight the app's continuous issues. Furthermore, some users believe that, although useful, the AI lacks a human touch, with one saying, "Annie has the emotional range of a brick wall."

Despite these issues, many users support for the app's integration into foreign language instructional contexts. Suggestions like "Teachers should apply it to teaching" and "Usage of the app should be encouraged among students" demonstrate the program's potential. Some even encourage utilizing it with younger learners, as one commenter mentions the app's capacity to "promote early language skills" in youngsters. However, worries concerning stability and relevance persist, with users reporting "unstable" performance and off-topic replies. Several also advocate for more instructor participation, stating, "Teachers should give more feedback and hints" to improve the learning experience. Taking a cautious approach, one user said, "I'll give this 10-15 years before applying to teaching to get maximum output."

### *Findings from interviews*

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews was used to answer the second research question: What is students' perception about adopting Call Annie for their future use in speaking? Following an initial in-depth familiarization with the data, initial codes were carefully developed to identify and categorize key insights systematically. The goal was to analyze the data and identify the tendencies that addressed students' perceptions of utilizing Call Annie for their future use in speaking. These initial keywords were then refined and grouped into basic themes, which were further organized into broader categories, regarding perceived advantages and disadvantages, willingness to use in the future.

### *Perceived advantages and disadvantages*

Participants using the "Call Annie" program for speaking practice reported an array of positive emotions. Participant 1 showed excitement about the utilization of the AI tool: "I am genuinely eager to practice speaking English with AI Annie." I previously said that while use Annie, I can engage in conversation smoothly" The participants exhibited increased confidence owing to the AI's capacity to provide organized debate topics. Participant 2 agreed, noting, "I have significant confidence because engaging in dialogue with an AI presents example topics, allowing students to brainstorm what to express when conversing with a real person." Furthermore, the application's design and customization functionalities enhanced user engagement. Participant 2 expressed gratitude for these attributes, remarking, "The app's layout is my favorite aspect."

The planning and offering of two-way discussion topics is seen as a benefit. This tool really helped me in preparation for real-life experience. Participant 2 said, "Interacting with AI can provide you with information and examples on difficult topic, which you can then employ in discussions with real individuals." Participant 3 expressed much appreciation for this feature, stating, "I am particularly fond of that function as it helps with the correction of pronunciation." Individuals saw the AI's ability to provide accurate spoken samples as a considerable benefit, especially for those attempting to ignore regional accents. Individual 3 said, "People worldwide demonstrate inaccurate pronunciation as a result of their accents..."

Participant 1 specifically acknowledged the program's use for IELTS preparation: "The Call Annie application provides a comprehensive selection of vocabulary and lexical resources for IELTS speaking, an essential evaluation for all English learners."

Participant 1 said that the software enhanced his learning beyond mere language competency, declaring, "Employing this app expands my perspective, enriches my intellect, and augments my knowledge." I have little knowledge of the world and want to get a deeper insight. Participant 1 commented on the versatility of Call Annie as a language acquisition tool, highlighting its effectiveness for learning English and other languages. He said, "I use it daily to improve my speaking abilities, and I also apply it to hone my Chinese skills."

Concerns over AI's ability to provide feedback were also observed. Interviewees indicated several problems with use the "Call Annie" program to improve speaking skills. Participant 3 articulated apprehension around the lack of authentic human connection, which they considered vital for developing good communication skills. "In modern society, it is essential to interact with a real person rather than a programmed automaton," said Participant 3. Participant 3 expressed concern that over-reliance on AI might lead to a decline in speaking skills and increased fear in real-life interactions. He said, "I believe individuals will invariably depend on AI in the future." We shall forfeit our speech faculties and endure considerable worry when confronting that individual in person. Participant 3 highlighted that essential elements of communication, such as eye contact and voice modulation, were deficient in AI-mediated interactions. He said, "During a conversation, one should sustain eye contact and can perceive how individuals employ language, adjust their vocal modulation, and augment their attractiveness to the opposite sex." Participant 2 said that "at times it provides information that is excessively general or overly detailed and tangential," perhaps leading to confusion or irrelevant educational experiences.

#### *Williness to use the app in the future*

During the talks, the interviewees had a range of opinions on how the "Call Annie" app could be used to improve speaking skills and how it should be used in the future. Some users said they were very eager to keep using the app, while others were not so sure.

Participant 1 made it clear that they planned to keep using the app by saying, "To be honest, I'll use the Call Annie app in the future." The Annie app is very important to me right now. I use it every day to improve both my speech and Chinese skills. This person liked how accurate and quick the AI answers were, which can maintain their practice without interruption. They added, "Because AI apps give accurate responses, and Annie always answers the question directly with no limit interruption, I think any apps will develop more and more in the future."

Also, Participant 2 said, "I think I will use this app in the future for speaking English." They were also interested in using the app to practice speaking. Because talking to AI can give you information and examples about a lot of different topics, which you can then use when you talk to a real person.

However, not all participants were as excited about how AI could be used to help people improve their speaking skills. Participant 3 was hesitant and said, "Being an outdoor person, I will not agree to use AI in the future." I think people should get together and talk because during a chat you can make eye contact and learn more about how they speak, what words they use, and how to create bonds with other people.

## Discussion

Overall, the participants had highlighted their emotional perception of the advantages and disadvantages of employing GenAI technologies, as well as the level of confidence in utilizing these tools for their academic studies in the future. However, **worries** were also noticed about GenAI's limited emotional intelligence, output unfairness and inaccuracy, and possible effects on social values and speaking skill progress. This aligns with studies from Zare et al. (2024).

In both the current study and previous research, students reported positive emotional responses when interacting with AI chatbots for speaking practice. The present findings indicated that many students felt excited and confident while using Call Annie, with participants emphasizing the app's ability to provide structured conversation topics and customization features that helped sustain their engagement. This finding aligns with the results from prior studies. As noted by Kim et al. (2021), students in South Korea also found AI chatbots helpful in creating a low-pressure environment, which allowed shy students to practice without the fear of making mistakes in front of peers. Similarly, Hoang et al. (2023) observed that students using AI chatbots experienced improved speaking confidence, particularly due to the non-judgmental features of the app. This suggests that AI tools such as Call Annie **generally promote** positive emotional engagement in language learners by reducing anxiety and providing supportive learning area.

The educational benefits of AI chatbots, especially in supporting speaking skills, were widely recognized in both the current study and the reviewed literature. Interview participants in this study highlighted several educational advantages of Call Annie, particularly in improving pronunciation and expanding vocabulary. This finding is consistent with the findings of Duong et al. (2024), who reported that Vietnamese students using AI voice chatbots for speaking practice experienced improvements in fluency and pronunciation. Similarly, Hoang et al. (2023) found that AI chatbots played a crucial role in helping students improve their pronunciation accuracy, especially in contexts where access to native speakers was limited. This shared perception across studies reinforces the idea that AI chatbots are effective tools for developing critical speaking skills, particularly in non-native English-speaking contexts.

Besides the promising prospects, the research also exposed obstacles surrounding GenAI technologies. In this study, students voiced concerns about how it would affect the value of their speaking skills, and the ethical issues, especially plagiarism, because they find it hard to distinguish originality in work, which were similar to the results from Duong et al. (2024) and Kim et al. (2021). A major concern raised by students in this study was the lack of authentic human interaction. Participant 3, for example, expressed frustration with the absence of body language such as eye contact and intonation, which are essential in real-life interactions. This mirrors findings from Belda-Medina et al. (2022), who noted that students found AI chatbots lacking in meaningful, dynamic conversations, which might result in superficial and robotic statements.

Furthermore, concerns about AI's ability to provide individualized feedback were consistent in both this study and previous studies. In this study, Participant 3 raised concerns about AI's inability to grasp idiomatic expressions and humor, a limitation also noted by students in the study by Mageira et al. (2022) and Nguyen (2023). The inability of AI systems to process



different linguistic inputs and respond to complex communicative contexts, such as sarcasm or humor, presents a significant barrier to their effectiveness in language learning. This highlights an important challenge that needs to be addressed in the development of AI-based language learning tools.

Finally, regarding the extent of willingness to use in the future, findings reveal divided views on the future acceptability of artificial intelligence chatbots for speaking practice, a phenomenon already seen in the existing literature. Certain study participants expressed enthusiasm for continued **Call Annie use, while others hesitated**. Participant 3 expressed a desire for genuine human interactions and articulated apprehensions over reliance only on artificial intelligence for communicative development. Similarly, Belda-Medina et al. (2022) cautioned students—concerned about the insufficient knowledge and error correction abilities of AI chatbots—to master their speaking skills.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, AI techniques like Call Annie can improve language acquisition. This study's data of positive emotional involvement shows that confidence enables students to practice more freely and take linguistic risks. Students say this technology may help shy students talk in class since the one-on-one connection with an AI partner reduces the pressure and anxiety of speaking in front of classmates. Teachers may also encourage students to utilize Call Annie to explore different themes and settings to improve their vocabulary and conversational abilities. Call Annie also lets students try out numerous themes and conversation techniques to improve their fluency and flexibility in varied speaking situations. To balance efficient usage and mistake correction features, students should be careful while using the app for academic work to avoid losing enthusiasm during social conversations in both virtual and practical contexts.

However, the findings indicate that AI chatbots should be used as supplementary tools rather than primary speaking partners in language learning. Furthermore, it is important for students to be mindful of AI's limitations, particularly in areas such as error correction, contextual appropriateness, and discourse complexity. Over-reliance on AI-generated responses could lead to superficial language development, reducing engagement in real-life conversations. To mitigate this, educators should implement structured scaffolding techniques, where AI is used for pre-task rehearsals and fluency exercises, followed by peer discussions and instructor-led speaking tasks to refine accuracy and contextual appropriateness.

It is also noted that a greater and more varied sample size in future language acquisition research will help to generalize results. Longitudinal research of language learners would be of great importance for educators in better understanding the long-term consequences of artificial intelligence technology. This would encourage academics opportunities to investigate how artificial intelligence technology influences language acquisition. Therefore, the use of artificial intelligence systems in language learning shall be in need of ongoing investigation. Comparative study reveals their goals and strengths, thus helping teachers and producers to develop language learning tools. Furthermore, researching artificial intelligence in group rather than individual language learning environments might allow teachers to include these technologies into their lessons.

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## Biodata

*Anh-Duong Nguyen has obtained 10 years of teaching the language to a diverse population of learners in a number of academic contexts (universities, businesses, language centers) until now. The areas of her research interests are using technologies in teaching English, curriculum designs and methods in teaching English skills.*

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