

Teacher's Perceptions of Integrating ChatGPT into Secondary ESL Learners' Speaking Activities

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Abstract

This qualitative research explores secondary school ESL teachers' perceptions of integrating ChatGPT into speaking activities. The study aims to examine how ChatGPT is integrated into ESL speaking instruction and to identify the challenges faced by teachers during its implementation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires involving three secondary school ESL teachers. The research was conducted using a qualitative research design and the data were analysed using thematic analysis to explore the patterns related to practices, the benefits, and limitations. The findings showed that ChatGPT is perceived as a supportive pedagogical tool that enhances students' pronunciation, speaking confidence, and engagement by providing a low-anxiety and non-judgemental learning environment. Moreover, ChatGPT assists teachers in managing instructional constraints such as limited lesson time and large class sizes. However, challenges including infrastructural limitations, students' limited language proficiency, and concerns over student over-reliance on AI were also identified. The study highlights the effectiveness of ChatGPT in English speaking activities and the importance of the ethical use of ChatGPT in secondary ESL speaking instruction.

Keywords: Teachers' Perceptions, ChatGPT, Speaking Activities, Artificial Intelligence (AI), English as a Second Language (ESL)

Introduction

In today's ESL classroom, technology has advanced into becoming an essential part of English Language Teaching (ELT), especially with the increasing use of digital tools in classrooms. In recent years, Artificial intelligence (AI) has begun to influence how teachers design lessons, support student learning, and manage classroom activities. Among all of these tools, ChatGPT is one of the most popular and widely used by many teachers. This AI-powered tool has its ability to generate responses, support conversations, and provide immediate feedback (Yildiz, 2024). This makes it a potentially valuable tool that supports language learning activities, especially in ESL classrooms. As English remains as a major subject in secondary education, it is important for researchers to look into how emerging technologies like ChatGPT can support classroom practices.

Speaking is one of the main skills, especially for secondary school students who are expected to communicate ideas more confidently and accurately while learning the English language. However, teaching speaking skills is often challenging for teachers due to limited classroom time, students' lack of confidence, uneven participation, and varying proficiency levels. These challenges often make it difficult for teachers to ensure that all students have enough opportunities to practice speaking during lessons. With the introduction of AI tools, teachers are presented with more options to support speaking activities compared to traditional teaching methods. Even though AI is becoming more common in education, teachers' understanding, perceptions and instructional decisions will determine how effective ChatGPT can be in supporting their teaching practices. This is because teachers play a significant role in determining how such tools are introduced, adapted, and managed in real classroom settings. These considerations highlight the importance of investigating how AI-supported speaking activities are implemented in specific educational contexts, especially in secondary ESL classrooms.

In the Malaysian secondary school context, the integration of AI tools such as ChatGPT is still new and underexplored, especially in speaking lessons. While the Malaysian Ministry of Education strongly encourages teachers to integrate technology in their lessons, they may still face various challenges like limited guidance, a lack of experience, ethical concerns, time constraints, and uncertainty regarding the appropriate use of AI in the classroom. These challenges highlight the need for research that focuses on teachers' experiences and perspectives when integrating ChatGPT into ESL speaking activities. Hence, the objective of this research is to collect Secondary ESL teachers' perceptions in Perak, Malaysia, on how they integrate ChatGPT into their speaking lessons or activities, as well as the challenges they face during the process.

In Malaysian secondary ESL classrooms, many students continue to face difficulties in speaking the English language confidently. Students often struggle with pronouncing words accurately and fluently due to a variety of factors influencing their ability to speak. For example, some students are afraid of making mistakes, or afraid of being laughed at by their peers if they make a mistake while speaking in front of the classroom. Students also do not have many opportunities to practice speaking during lessons. This causes them to practice less and affects their ability to speak. At the same time, these issues also affect the teacher. It becomes more difficult and challenging for ESL teachers because they usually have limited lesson time, often around one hour per class, and they must manage large class sizes. As a result of these conditions, teachers find it difficult to provide individual speaking practice and personalised feedback to each and every student during classroom activities.

As technology advances, artificial intelligence tools such as ChatGPT, may pique ESL teachers' interest to integrate this tool, as it supports ESL speaking activities. ChatGPT can provide additional language practice and support for speaking tasks beyond traditional classroom teaching methods. This study is novel because it focuses specifically on Malaysian secondary ESL teachers' real classroom practices and perceptions of integrating ChatGPT in speaking activities, which is an area that remains underexplored in existing literature. While the majority of previous studies has focused mainly on the technical features and potential benefits of AI tools, this study contributes to the social sciences by providing empirical insights

into teachers' decision-making and the challenges they face when integrating ChatGPT in their speaking lessons.

Although ChatGPT has the ability to support speaking activities, many teachers are still exploring how to use this tool effectively in their English classrooms. There is little information about how ESL teachers understand and apply ChatGPT in real-life classroom settings. In addition, most existing research focuses more on the AI's features and potential benefits instead of teachers' real-life experiences. This is important because teachers play a significant role in designing and conducting speaking activities, and their perceptions influence how ChatGPT is integrated in actual classroom settings. Therefore, the objective of this study was (1) to explore how ESL teachers integrate ChatGPT in ESL Secondary Speaking Activities. The study also aimed (2) to identify the challenges faced by ESL teachers when integrating ChatGPT in ESL Secondary Speaking Activities. To address these research objectives, the study is also guided by the following research questions: (1) How do ESL teachers integrate ChatGPT in ESL Secondary Speaking Activities and (2) what are the challenges faced by ESL teachers when integrating ChatGPT in ESL Secondary Speaking Activities?

Literature Review

Recent studies have shown that there is a growing interest in the integration of artificial intelligence tools to support language learning, with ChatGPT being one of the most commonly discussed examples in today's English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom. Several studies found that ChatGPT is an interactive learning tool that allows students to practice language skills independently outside of the classroom. For example, research by Alwehebi (2024) explored the use of ChatGPT as a learning strategy among high school EFL students in Saudi Arabia and discovered that students perceived this tool as beneficial in increasing their classroom's engagement and supporting language acquisition. The study also found that ChatGPT provided opportunities for students to practice English in a more flexible and personalised way, as well as allowing them to practice the language at their own pace. Similarly, Moon et al. (2025) conducted a study on the integration of ChatGPT in EFL education and suggested that this tool can promote language learning by providing instant responses, explanations, and examples, which may help learners in understanding how to use the language effectively. These studies reflect a broader shift in ELT approaches towards the implementation of technology, in which digital tools are used to support learner autonomy and extend learning outside of the classroom. Nonetheless, most of these studies acknowledge ChatGPT's potential in language learning but focus mainly on students' experiences rather than how teachers integrate ChatGPT into their teaching practices. As a result, these gaps suggest that there is a need for further exploration of how ChatGPT is integrated into real-life classroom contexts from the perspective of ESL teachers.

Studies have also looked into how integrating ChatGPT in English lessons can support speaking activities in English language learning. Many researchers focused on students' speaking confidence and anxiety as one of the important areas to study. For instance, research by Saptiany et al., (2024) conducted a study in Indonesia and discovered that the use of ChatGPT's voice mode feature helped reduce students' speaking anxiety when learning English. The findings of this study revealed positive outcomes from students who felt more comfortable interacting with ChatGPT while practicing spoken English because they were not afraid of being judged or criticised. This allowed them to practice speaking more freely, which

is vital in ELT contexts where students are often too shy or afraid to speak in class due to fear of making mistakes.

Other research has also highlighted that ChatGPT has the ability to support speaking practice through interaction and immediate feedback. Research by Al-Zahrani (2025) discovered that incorporating ChatGPT in English teaching and learning allows students to practice speaking skills through prompts and ongoing interaction, in which learners respond and receive immediate feedback from the tool. These features not only provide students extra opportunities to practice English, but also allow them to engage themselves in simulated conversations. Despite the positive outcomes, many of these research continue to focus on learner's responses and emotional experiences of using ChatGPT. As a result, the findings show that there is still limited discussion on how teachers organise and manage speaking activities while integrating ChatGPT in actual classroom settings.

Recent studies have also explored the role of teachers and the challenges of integrating ChatGPT into English language Teaching. Tran and Tran (2023) conducted research on the use of ChatGPT in language learning from a digital literacy perspective, highlighting that teachers play a significant role in ensuring that students use ChatGPT appropriately. The study emphasised that teachers act not only as facilitators, but also mediators who help students understand how to evaluate information and reflect on the responses given by ChatGPT in order to avoid students becoming overly reliant on using this AI tool. This study shows that the effectiveness of ChatGPT in ELT depends greatly on teachers, who are not only responsible for designing speaking activities and teaching language content, but also for guiding and monitoring students in using AI tools in a meaningful and appropriate manner. On the other hand, Hutauruk et al., (2024) also discovered that, while chatbots can increase students' interest and motivation in learning English, teachers must still design their lessons carefully and consider how these tools can be used effectively to promote meaningful learning. The study noted that without clear guidance from teachers, students may rely too heavily on chatbot responses rather than developing their own language skills. These findings suggest that, while ChatGPT can support ELT approaches and techniques, teachers still need clear teaching strategies and knowledge in order to integrate ChatGPT into classroom activities effectively.

Recent studies exploring the integration of ChatGPT in English language teaching have shown various research gaps. The majority of these existing studies focus on students' personal thoughts and experiences, such as their engagement, motivation, vocabulary development, and speaking anxiety, especially in higher education or non-secondary contexts (Alwehebi, 2024; Hutauruk et al., 2024; Saptiany et al., 2025). Although these studies provide valuable insights into ChatGPT's potential benefits, there is still a lack of research that looks into how ESL teachers integrate ChatGPT into speaking activities. In addition, most of these studies focus on the features or effectiveness of AI tools rather than on teachers' classroom practices, decision-making processes, and the challenges they face when integrating ChatGPT into their lessons (Al-Zahrani, 2025; Tran & Tran, 2023). Furthermore, there is also limited research on the integration of ChatGPT in ESL speaking activities at the secondary school level, especially in the Malaysian context. As a result, there is a lack of understanding of teachers' perceptions, practical strategies, and constraints when integrating ChatGPT into secondary ESL speaking lessons. These gaps highlight the need for a qualitative study that focuses on ESL teachers'

perspectives to better understand how ChatGPT is used in real classroom settings, particularly in speaking activities.

The study also uses Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to explain how ChatGPT is integrated into ESL secondary speaking activities. According to Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural theory, language learning happens through social interaction and communication. From this perspective, ChatGPT can be seen as a tool that supports interaction by allowing students to practice speaking in a low-pressure environment, with teachers acting as mediators and facilitators, guiding and managing its use in the classroom. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) also helps explain teachers' perceptions of integrating ChatGPT in English language teaching. According to TAM, individuals are more inclined to adopt technology if they find it beneficial and easy to use (Davis, 1989). In the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), teachers may be more willing to integrate ChatGPT into speaking activities if they believe that the tool supports their teaching goals and can be managed within classroom time. As a result, this study, which combines both Sociocultural Theory and TAM, discusses how ChatGPT supports speaking practice through interaction and how teachers' perceptions impact its adoption in ESL secondary classrooms.

Methods

Research Sample

This study employed a qualitative case study research design. A case study design was deemed appropriate as it allows for an in-depth exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. In this study, the phenomenon is the integration of ChatGPT into ESL secondary speaking activities, while the context involves secondary school ESL classrooms with constraints such as limited instructional time and large class sizes.

The richness and granularity with which teachers' perspectives, instruction, and challenges could be explored was made possible by the qualitative design. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaire items, with opportunities for participants to voice their opinions freely but according to the research aims and questions. The sample involved three ESL secondary school teachers chosen through purposive sampling for this study. Purposeful sampling was also selected to guarantee that the participants had an experience and knowledge that are pertinent to the integration of ChatGPT in ESL speaking activities. The criteria used for selection were: (1) a secondary school ESL teacher, and (2) experience in using ChatGPT or equivalent AI tools conduct speaking lessons.

Two main research instruments were used in this study: a semi-structured interview and an open-ended questionnaire administered through Google Forms. These participants reflected varied views in terms of their teaching contexts and experiences; hence, an illumination on how ChatGPT is employed to facilitate ESL secondary speaking activities and the perceived difficulties were achieved.

The main research tools that this research used were semi-structured interview and open-ended questionnaire, which was distributed through Google Form. Three ESL secondary school teachers were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. This instrument was

selected because of its flexibility to explore further in respondents' replies, while still ensuring some degree of uniformity across the interviews. Interview questions were developed to capture both research questions. To address Research Question 1 (How do ESL teachers integrate ChatGPT in ESL secondary speaking activities?), the interview questions focused on teachers' initial experiences with ChatGPT, the types of speaking activities used (e.g., role-plays, dialogue practice, pronunciation practice, and simulations), and students' responses to ChatGPT-assisted speaking activities. To address Research Question 2 (What are the challenges faced by ESL teachers when integrating ChatGPT in ESL secondary speaking activities?), the questions explored challenges encountered, perceived limitations of ChatGPT (such as accuracy, relevance of responses, and student over-reliance on AI), and teachers' suggestions for improving future integration. The interview questions were adapted from Saptiany (2025), ensuring content relevance and alignment with existing research on ChatGPT in speaking activities.

An open-ended questionnaire was employed to support interview data using Google Forms. The survey had the effect of making participants recall their experiences and express themselves in writing, generating additional understandings that might not have otherwise transpired during on-tape interviews. The open-ended structure allowed respondents to expand their interpretations, concerns and pedagogical practices without limitation. Adapted from a research by Tran (2023), the items of this questionnaire investigated teachers' uses of ChatGPT in language learning settings, and what influences on their practices in class.

Research Procedure

Data collection was carried out in two stages. The participants were initially contacted and informed of the investigation. If individuals agreed to take part in the study, interviews were arranged by mutual arrangement at a time acceptable for both parties. Studies were conducted online and interviews were audiorecorded with participants' permission to ensure that the data could be precisely captured. Secondly, the open-ended form of questionnaire was conducted by Google Forms. Subjects were provided with the questionnaire and an adequate time to fill it out at their own convenience. The researchers kept collected data confidential and could be accessed only by the researcher.

Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires was conducted on data. Thematic analysis was chosen due to its ability to detect, analyze and report on patterns or themes within qualitative data. The analysis followed several steps. First, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim, and questionnaire responses were compiled. Second, the data were read repeatedly to achieve familiarisation. Third, initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas related to the research questions. Fourth, the codes were organised into broader themes, such as types of ChatGPT integration, perceived benefits, instructional challenges, and limitations of AI use. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data.

Ethical considerations were carefully addressed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were also

preserved, and all electronic reports used pseudonyms (P1, P2, and P3) to protect the identity of participants. The data were securely maintained and was used for academic purpose only.

This study has several limitations. First, the number of teachers (three) is small and thus, limits the external validity of the results. The findings are based on the experiences of a sample of ESL secondary school teachers and may not be generalizable to all teachers. Second, the data were self-reported, and may be biased by individual participants' personal perceptions. Third, by concentrating on teachers' perceptions, students' own views and actual speaking performance results were not investigated. In spite of these limitations, the study offers useful information about how ChatGPT is utilised in ESL secondary speaking activities and the challenges which teachers encounter, pointing contrasting directions for future research and classroom implementation.

Results

ChatGPT as a Support Tool for Pronunciation and Speaking Confidence

All participants reported that ChatGPT was primarily used as a support tool to enhance students' pronunciation and speaking confidence. Participant 1 highlighted the use of ChatGPT's audio and voice features to model correct pronunciation, particularly British English pronunciation, which students found novel and engaging.

"When they knew that ChatGPT has an audio feature where you could record yourself and it can actually speak out the response, that thing was quite new to them." (P1)

The ability to listen and repeat after ChatGPT reduced students' fear of making mistakes, as the AI was perceived as non-judgemental. This finding suggests that ChatGPT provides a low-anxiety environment that encourages students to take risks in speaking, especially among low to intermediate proficiency learners.

The findings were also supported by responses from the open-ended survey. Teachers indicated that the integration of ChatGPT during speaking activities increased students' confidence and willingness to participate. Respondents also noted that students who are particularly shy or low-proficiency learners, felt more prepared to express themselves and were less afraid of making mistakes because ChatGPT provided immediate language support.

ChatGPT for Role-Plays, Dialogues, and Simulations

Another major theme was the use of ChatGPT to generate dialogues and role-play scenarios. All three participants reported integrating ChatGPT to assist students in creating scripts for role-plays, debates, or presentations.

Participant 1 described using ChatGPT to generate contextually appropriate dialogues for students with limited background knowledge:

"As someone who doesn't have a background in law, this is where ChatGPT comes. I would ask it to create a dialogue that is suitable for A1 to B2 students." (P1)

Similarly, Participant 2 emphasised that ChatGPT helped save instructional time:

"Coming up with script, especially for low to intermediate level students can be quite time consuming. Therefore, the integration of ChatGPT actually saves a lot of time." (P2)

Participant 3 also used ChatGPT mainly for role-play preparation, particularly as a pre-class activity:

“I usually ask them to use ChatGPT and prepare their presentation at home. Then, they will present it in the next lesson.” (P3)

These findings indicate that ChatGPT functions as a cognitive scaffold, enabling students to participate more actively in speaking tasks within limited classroom time.

The survey results also showed that ChatGPT was often used during the lesson development and pre-lesson stages. Teachers stated that ChatGPT helped students brainstorm vocabulary, generate sample dialogues, and prepare ideas for speaking activities. This support allowed students to participate more actively in speaking activities, as well as helping teachers to manage their lesson time more efficiently.

Increased Student Engagement Compared to Traditional Speaking Activities

Participants consistently reported that students were more engaged and willing to speak when ChatGPT was integrated into lessons compared to traditional textbook-based speaking activities. Participant 1 explained that students in rural contexts often become passive during conventional speaking lessons due to fear of peer judgement:

“When you’re teaching speaking lessons traditionally... the room often goes silent because they are mentally translating from their dialect.” (P1)

In contrast, ChatGPT reduced students’ affective barriers:

“When they know that they are interacting with someone who is not real, they are willing to take risks when responding.” (P1)

Participants 2 and 3 similarly observed increased enthusiasm and participation when ChatGPT was used, as students perceived technology-based lessons as more enjoyable and relevant. In accordance with the results from the semi-structured interview, survey respondents noticed that students were more engaged when ChatGPT was integrated into speaking lessons. Teachers noted that students were more excited, interactive, and willing to participate in group discussions. As a result, the integration of AI-based tools was perceived as it makes speaking activities more interesting and meaningful for students.

Limited Infrastructure and Internet Connectivity

A major challenge highlighted by all participants was limited infrastructure and unreliable internet connectivity, particularly in rural and sub-urban schools. Participant 1 emphasised that unstable internet access often disrupted lessons:

“There are days... the internet speed is so low that ChatGPT won’t load at all.” (P1)

Participant 2 echoed this concern, noting limited access to technology-equipped classrooms:

“The only room that supports the use of technology is the computer lab, and I have to book it one week in advance.” (P2)

These constraints often required teachers to prepare backup lessons, increasing their workload and limiting consistent integration of ChatGPT.

This challenge is further supported by the open-ended survey responses. Teachers often mentioned the challenges they faced when integrating ChatGPT, such as unstable or slow internet connections, limited access to devices, and inadequate facilities, especially in rural schools. However, respondents also mentioned that time constraints and the need for

additional lesson planning made it difficult for them to integrate ChatGPT into speaking lessons consistently.

Language Proficiency and Prompting Difficulties

Another challenge identified was students' limited English proficiency, which affected their ability to prompt ChatGPT effectively. Participant 1 explained:

"They know how to ask in Malay, but when they need to change that prompting into English, it becomes a whole other thing." (P1)

This resulted in inaccurate or overly complex responses from ChatGPT, requiring teachers to intervene and simplify outputs for students.

This issue was also addressed in the open-ended survey responses. Teachers stated that some students did not know how to prompt ChatGPT correctly. This caused ChatGPT to provide them with responses that were irrelevant or unsuitable. In addition, students sometimes became overly excited when using the tool. Such behaviour also caused them to lose focus and face difficulties in generating the appropriate language for speaking tasks. As a result, these findings illustrate the importance of teacher guidance in enhancing students' prompting ability.

Over-Reliance on ChatGPT and Reduced Critical Thinking

All participants expressed concern about students becoming overly dependent on ChatGPT. Participant 1 strongly cautioned against excessive reliance:

"If they feel that something could make their work easier, they will stop thinking at all." (P1)

Participant 2 similarly observed that students tended to use ChatGPT outputs without modification:

"They will just take whatever that is given by ChatGPT and use it... without paraphrasing." (P2)

Participant 3 addressed this issue by limiting ChatGPT use to group work:

"That is why I don't use AI tools like ChatGPT too frequently." (P3)

These findings suggest that while ChatGPT supports speaking activities, teacher guidance is crucial to prevent dependency and promote critical thinking.

Survey respondents also raised concerns regarding students' dependence on using ChatGPT during speaking activities. Teachers reported that some students relied heavily on AI-generated responses without knowing whether the responses provided by ChatGPT were true or false. This limits their ability to construct sentences independently or speak naturally without reading or memorising the output. However, students with lower proficiency were seen to struggle with understanding and adapting to ChatGPT's responses. As a result, this issue raised concerns about their poor critical thinking skills during speaking activities.

Perceived Limitations of ChatGPT in ESL Speaking Lessons

Participants also highlighted limitations related to contextual relevance and language level. Participant 1 noted that ChatGPT often produced western-centric examples that were unfamiliar to rural Malaysian students:

"The examples given may be American or European, which can be quite confusing for my students." (P1)

Additionally, ChatGPT sometimes generated language beyond students' proficiency levels, requiring teachers to carefully constrain prompts.

Survey respondents also expressed a range of opinions regarding policy and ethical considerations. While some teachers were unsure of certain formal guidelines, others highlighted school-level concerns about device usage policies and internet access during lessons. Several survey respondents stated that existing curriculum documents mentioned the use of technology in general but did not explicitly specify the ethical and pedagogical use of AI tools like ChatGPT. As a result, teachers must be cautious and take personal responsibility to ensure that ChatGPT is used ethically and pedagogically in speaking activities.

Integrated Outcomes, Contributions, and Limitations

The thematic data analysis suggests that ChatGPT is considered by ESL teachers as a supportive supplement for speaking in secondary schools. Overall, educators feel ChatGPT helps students practice pronunciation, improve confidence in their speaking abilities and become more engaged thanks to the low-pressure and nonperspective judgemental nature of conversation. Role-plays, dialogues and showing evidence of its preparation for presentation proved particularly useful in managing small contact time with students and large numbers. These results indicate that ChatGPT can serve as an accessible pedagogical scaffolding in well-designed speaking classes.

Despite the positive results, some barriers and limitations became evident. Teachers mentioned infrastructure issues such as unreliable internet, low level of English proficiency that impede prompt generation and student overdependence on AI responses. From a critical perspective, though the results enrich ELT research literature in its provision of qualitative data on teachers' situated-in-the-moment interaction with generative AI, the small nature of the sample and use of self-reported evidence restrict the extent to which the study can be generalised. In general, these results underscore the need for cautious use of ChatGPT with clear pedagogical guidance, and that it plays a supporting part to teacher-led instruction rather than as an alternative.

On the other hand, survey respondents also provided practical suggestions for integrating ChatGPT effectively into ESL speaking lessons. Teachers emphasised that ChatGPT should be used as a support tool to help students think rather than as a replacement for their own thoughts. Teachers should also set clear boundaries and provide structured guidance so that students do not misuse or heavily rely on this tool. Respondents also suggested that combining ChatGPT with pair or group speaking activities will help build their vocabulary before using this tool. However, teachers should also monitor students closely to ensure they speak independently and meaningfully.

Conclusion

This study explored ESL secondary school teachers' perceptions of integrating ChatGPT into speaking activities, with particular attention to how the tool is used in classroom practice and the challenges encountered. The results show that ChatGPT is mostly used as a supporting tool to improve pronunciation, build confidence in speaking, and promote role-plays, dialogues and presentation activities. Teachers identified ChatGPT as an environment of low anxiety and non-judgment that motivated even their lower- to mid-proficiency students to

take part in speaking activities more freely. Furthermore, the inclusion of ChatGPT was seen to improve student participation and help teachers cope with time and class-size pressures. Yet, issues such as lack of infrastructure and internet connection, students' difficulties with successful prompting, constraint into artificial intelligence prediction, ChatGPT's contextual or language-level inexactness are challenges that point to the importance for careful planning and teacher guidance.

This study is significant for ELT research and practice as it provides qualitative insights into teachers' real classroom experiences with generative AI, contributing to the growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning. Practically, the findings suggest that ChatGPT has the potential to support ESL speaking development by reducing anxiety, enhancing engagement, and maximising limited instructional time, provided that its use is guided and pedagogically informed. The study also underscores the importance of teacher training in AI integration and prompt design, as well as adequate infrastructural support, to ensure the ethical, effective, and responsible use of ChatGPT in secondary ESL speaking lessons.

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