



## **STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING CHARACTER AI TO IMPROVE STUDENTS SPEAKING SKILLS AT PRIMA BANGSA INSTITUTE CIREBON**

**Veronika Simbolon**

Institut Prima Bangsa  
[verosmbln2@gmail.com](mailto:verosmbln2@gmail.com)

**Lili Sururi Asipi**

Institut Prima Bangsa  
[lili@stkipinvada.ac.id](mailto:lili@stkipinvada.ac.id)

**Virga Putra Darma**

Institut Prima Bangsa  
[virgaputradarma@gmail.com](mailto:virgaputradarma@gmail.com)

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### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this study is to explore students' perceptions of the use of Character AI in improving English speaking skills and to identify the limitations or problems encountered by students when practicing speaking with this technology. Using a qualitative descriptive method, this research was conducted with eighth semester students of the English Education Study Program at Institut Prima Bangsa, Cirebon. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and speaking tests. The findings show that students view Character AI positively, as it helps improve fluency, pronunciation, confidence, and provides more opportunities to practice speaking. However, challenges such as technical issues, limited response accuracy, and reduced natural interaction were also identified. Overall, this study highlights the potential of Character AI as an innovative tool for developing speaking skills.

**Keywords:** Student Perceptions, Character AI, Speaking Skills, Artificial Intelligence, Language Learning

## INTRODUCTION

As a communication tool, language plays an important role in conveying goals to others. People can express their thoughts and feelings through language. Therefore, effective and communicative use of language is essential in building and strengthening interpersonal relationships and helping individuals communicate effectively with others (Fauzan, 2019). Speaking is one of the practices of communication. Ratnasari (2020) states that speaking skills are one of the most important language skills compared to other skills such as writing, reading, and listening. This is because speaking is the most direct and real form of communication in everyday life. English is a foreign language in Indonesia. Because of this situation, learning English has become important in schools, especially to higher education (Pobriana, 2019).

Speaking fluently in a second or foreign language is an indication of proficiency in English. However, many students struggle to achieve the desired level of fluency mainly due to a lack of self-confidence. As a result, they often feel uncomfortable or afraid of making mistakes and consequently they avoid opportunities to communicate directly with native English speakers. This condition not only hinders the development of speaking skills, but also limits the opportunity to improve language skills through real-life interaction which is an essential part of the English learning process. Meanwhile in our modern era not only does technology keep evolving year after year especially in the framework of acquiring English skills, there are a variety of resources available including digital resources that assist students in learning on their own or in the use of educational tools.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become a major innovation influencing the education sector by reshaping teaching and learning practices (Chen et al., 2020). Technological advancements have expanded access to AI-based applications, increasing the flexibility and accessibility of language learning. Fundamentally, AI is designed to support and perform human tasks through virtual assistance (Günay et al., 2023).

In the context of speaking education, AI-powered technologies such as Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) enable learners to practice oral communication by analyzing speech patterns in a manner similar to human speech recognition (Southwell et al., 2022). One emerging application of AI in language learning is Character AI, which extends interaction beyond temporal and spatial limitations. Character AI allows users to engage in conversations with virtual characters, including fictional and historical figures (Zou et al., 2023). Through interactive

dialogue, learners can develop speaking skills and enhance listening comprehension in a more immersive and engaging learning environment.

Previous researchers have discussed several relevant studies on students' perceptions of using Character AI to improve speaking skills. The first previous research by Han (2020) entitled "The Effects of Voice-based AI Chatbots on Korean EFL Middle School Students' Speaking Competence and Affective Domains". The results show that the AI chatbot significantly enhanced the speaking skills of EFL students. The survey results indicated that students' views on AI chatbot-supported English learning enhanced as time progressed. Thus, this research provides valuable insights into the application of AI chatbots for English learning in EFL contexts, recommending that EFL educators consider incorporating AI chatbots into their teaching methods.

The second research by Kadaruddin (2023) entitled "Improving Students' Speaking Skill Using Artificial Intelligence on The Second Semester of English Program at Iain Parepare". As a result, the study's findings showed that AI may effectively improve students' speaking skills and that students had a positive opinion of the tool in this regard.

The third research by Hung Curong (2024) entitled "Using AI for Students' Attitudes to Improve their Speaking Skills at University". The findings indicated that students preferred using AI technology in their English-speaking exercises, but that the current generation of AI apps has limitations. The study helps educators create a positive learning environment and improve speaking development by understanding their perspectives about English education and its potential impact on speaking skills.

The fourth research by Ningsih et al, (2024) entitled "Character AI in EFL Classrooms: Student Perceptions and Experiences". The results show that students like and considered Character AI to be interesting, which increased their joy and interest in their English language learning. Students' grammar and sentence construction skills significantly improved as a result of the AI's individualized feedback and real-time adjustments. Character AI has the potential to be an effective teaching tool in EFL classrooms.

The fifth research by Rizky et al, (2024) "*Analisis Faktor Penggunaan Character Ai Di Kalangan Mahasiswa Dengan Metode Utaut*". The study's findings show that social influence is the factor that has the biggest impact on students' use of Character AI, while performance expectations, effort expectations, facilitating conditions, and perceived risk have no significant impact on students' behavioral intention to use the platform.

Based on the previous research above, the gap of these studies lies in their focus and purpose. Therefore, the researcher conducted a study entitled “Students' Perception of Using Character AI to Improve Students' Speaking Skills in The English Education Department at Prima Bangsa Institute Cirebon.” While previous studies investigated what influences students to use Character AI, they did not examine how effective Character AI is in improving specific academic skills, such as speaking skills. The current study fills this gap by exploring Students perceptions the role of Character AI in developing their speaking skills, identifying potential challenges, and assessing its practical benefits in English education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative descriptive methodology is used with the aim of providing a thorough and comprehensive description of the phenomenon, utilizing data obtained by the researcher. Meanwhile, according to Fiddiyasari & Pustika (2021), descriptive qualitative is research that seeks to solve existing problems based on data. Data is obtained naturally by investigating student perceptions of using character AI in improving English speaking skills in the English education department. This research was conducted at Prima Bangsa Institut Cirebon, especially in English Education Department which located in the Province of West Java. Participants in this study were selected based on the following criteria: (1) students who are enrolled in English Education Department at Prima Bangsa Institute Cirebon, explaining a basic understanding of the English language; (2) students who are willing to participate, explaining their interest and commitment to the research topic; and (3) students who have used AI, enabling researchers to examine their perspectives and experiences with this technology in relation to English learning.

The researcher uses these three instruments of study in this statement to provide answers to the current research question so that data can be gathered. Creswell (2018) states that there are four main techniques of collecting data in qualitative research: Observation, Interview, documents and audiovisual materials. Data for this study was collected from a selection of sources to cover various stages from data collection to analysis. Creswell's techniques used by researchers in this study were observation and interviews and in addition researchers used tests to collect data.

Observation is a method of collecting data directly at the research site (Cresswell). In this study, observation was conducted by distributing questionnaires as a preliminary study. The

questionnaires were created in Google Form format for easy distribution. The instruments used were closed questions with “Yes” or “No” answer options. The questionnaire was given to 35 English Education students with a total of 10 checklist questions. This study used four indicators from Davis' TAM Theory, namely Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Attitude Toward Use, and Behavioral Intention to Use, which referred to Kaddarudin's (2023) study.

Interviews were conducted as a follow-up to obtain more in-depth information from the questionnaire results. The researcher prepared 5 open-ended questions and recorded the participants' answers using a telephone recorder and notes. The interviews involved 3 students in their 8th semester of the English Education Study Program at the Prima Bangsa Institute who had filled out the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian so that the participants could answer more easily, and the results were then translated back by the researcher.

Then the researcher used the test, the test used in this study is a descriptive test. This descriptive test includes elements of speaking skills. This test aims to measure students' speaking skills. Students will be assessed using the oral test scoring system described by Oller in Suhana's research journal (2020). The assessment categories are divided into five levels: scores of 80–100 are classified as Very Good, scores of 70–79 are Good, scores of 60–69 are Enough, scores of 50–59 are Less, and scores of 0–49 are Fail.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, the researcher explains all data obtained through observation, tests, and interviews. The data described aims to determine students' perceptions of the use of the Character AI application in improving English speaking skills. This study was conducted to explore students' perceptions of the use of Character AI in improving the speaking skills of students in the English Education Department, as well as to identify the limitations or problems faced by students when practicing their language skills with Character AI. This research was conducted from May 12, 2025, to August 9, 2025, with the research participants being 8th semester students at the Prima Bangsa Institute.

### **Student Perceptions of Using Character AI**

In examining student perceptions of the use of Character AI, researchers used four indicators from Davis in TAM as a reference, as written by Kaddarudin (2023) in his research.

**Table 1.** Result From Observation

Question	Perceived Ease of Use	Perceived Usefulness	Attitude Towards to Use	Behavioural Intention to Use
1				91.4%
2				60%
3			68.6%	
4	68,6%			
5		71.4%		
6	74.3%			
7			65.7%	
8		68.6%		
9		74.3%		
10		65.7%		

Based on the questionnaire results, students generally showed a positive perception of the use of the Character AI application in English language learning. The very high score on Perceived Ease of Use (91.4%) indicates that ease of use is the strongest factor supporting students' acceptance of this technology. These findings suggest that when AI-based learning tools are designed to be simple and intuitive, students are more willing to use them without experiencing cognitive or technical barriers.

The Perceived Usefulness score ranged from 60% to 74.3%, indicating that students view Character AI as a fairly useful tool in supporting their learning activities. Although most respondents acknowledged its benefits, the relatively lower score compared to ease of use suggests that the value of this application has not been fully optimized. This suggests that while Character AI can support speaking practice, its contribution to measurable skill improvement still needs improvement, especially through more application-oriented features.

Findings related to Attitudes Toward Use (65.7%–74.3%) and Behavioral Intentions to Use (68.6%–74.3%) further reinforce this interpretation. Students tend to show positive attitudes toward Character AI and express their intention to continue using it in the future. However, their

acceptance appears to be conditional. Many students still prefer direct interaction with humans or peers, indicating that Character AI is seen more as a complementary tool than a substitute for traditional speaking practice. This highlights the practical implication that AI applications are most effective when integrated into blended learning environments.

Overall, these findings are consistent with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) proposed by Davis, as referenced by Kaddarudin (2023). Ease of use plays a central role in shaping students' attitudes, while perceived usefulness reinforces their motivation to continue using the application. Positive learning experiences such as increased confidence and opportunities for repeated practice contribute to positive attitudes. However, there are challenges that must be considered, namely the limited information about the existence of Character AI applications among students.

### **Limitations or Problems Students have when practicing Speaking Skills with Character AI**

Based on the results of the interview and questionnaire analysis, it can be concluded that although Character AI has great potential in supporting English speaking skills learning, there are several limitations and problems faced by students when using it. These limitations and problems include: The first Limitations in Understanding. One of the most fundamental problems experienced by students is when Character AI cannot understand unclear pronunciation. Some students reported that when they uttered sentences in English with imperfect pronunciation, Character AI responded in another language, such as Spanish. In addition, Character AI also does not have the ability to evaluate pronunciation accurately. The system only transcribes speech into text without providing feedback on pronunciation, intonation, or accent errors. The second Slow Response and Heavy Application. Technical limitations were also a frequently mentioned obstacle. Some students complain that Character AI has a long response time and the application feels heavy when used. These conditions make the learning process not run smoothly and reduce user comfort. The third, Less Natural and Spontaneous Interaction Quality. The characteristics of interaction with Character AI that tend to be awkward, monotonous, and “too programmed” are another weakness felt by students. Some of them stated that talking to the Character AI felt like talking to a machine, not a human. Although the AI responds, the nuances of spontaneity, improvisation, and emotional expression are not present in the interaction.

In general, the data obtained from this study shows that the use of Character AI in training English speaking skills still faces various challenges. Although most students welcomed the

convenience and flexibility offered by this technology, there are still many shortcomings that make Character AI not fully effective as a comprehensive learning tool.

## CONCLUSION

Students' perceptions of Using Character AI in Improving English Speaking Skills in The English Language Education Department at Prima Bangsa Institute show that most students feel the positive benefits of this technology, with around 65% reporting an increase in confidence in speaking English. The non-judgmental learning environment encourages them to practice without fear of making mistakes, making it effective as a means of self-practice. However, major drawbacks remain, such as the AI inability to understand unclear pronunciation, resulting in incorrect responses in other languages, as well as a lack of constructive feedback on grammar and pronunciation.

This risk causing repeated mistakes without correction. Overall, students rated Character AI as a promising tool for language acquisition, although interaction with humans is still considered irreplaceable because it is more spontaneous and has emotional depth. Therefore, to be more effective, Character AI needs to be further developed so that it can provide more accurate evaluations and more natural responses.

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