ESL LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF AI CONVERSATIONAL AGENTS (CHATGPT) IN REDUCING SPEAKING ANXIETY

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Abstract

For Malaysian ESL learners in secondary schools, speaking anxiety is still a significant obstacle in achieving confident English communication. While ChatGPT has demonstrated potential in fostering language learning, few studies have investigated its role in mitigating speaking anxiety in language learning. Thus, this study examined the changes in speaking anxiety after using ChatGPT and examined the perceptions of usefulness and ease of use among learners. The mixed methods convergent parallel design was used. The English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS) was adapted to measure students' pre- and post-English language classroom anxiety levels in a 30-student sample of purposive participants, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 participants. The paired-samples t-test showed that the overall speaking anxiety of the participants significantly decreased after the intervention ($t(29) = -40.41$, $p < 0.001$). Fear of negative evaluation decreased the most of all three dimensions, followed by communication apprehension and test anxiety. The themes from the thematic analysis were: ChatGPT creates a non-judgmental context, which decreases speaking anxiety; repetitive and self-paced practice builds speaking confidence; and speaking confidence gained from ChatGPT practice carries over to real-life situations. The results align with the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Krashen and the Technology Acceptance Model, suggesting that ChatGPT may help to lower emotional filters and that learners saw it as useful and easy to use. In conclusion, the study underscores the possibility of using ChatGPT as a pedagogical assistant to alleviate speaking anxiety among secondary school ESL learners in Malaysia.

Keywords: *Speaking anxiety; ChatGPT; ESL learners; Malaysian secondary schools; mixed-methods research*

INTRODUCTION

English has become a dominant global language, and proficiency in speaking is essential for effective communication in both academic and professional settings (Ahmed, 2023). Speaking effectively is a challenge for many students in Malaysia, where English is used as a second language. Speaking is considered one of the most difficult skills and can sometimes become an anxiety-triggering activity, hindering learners from engaging confidently in oral communication (Asikin & Ibrahim, 2020 & Ch'ng et al., 2025). English has long been recognised as a second language in Malaysia and is an essential part of high school and university education systems. Among the four core language skills, speaking remains the most difficult to master, as it requires

learners to react quickly and naturally. It is also one of the most visible indicators of language competency.

Speaking anxiety is the fear or uneasiness associated with speaking in a second language, and it is widely recognised as a major barrier to language acquisition. Learners feel anxious about making mistakes, being negatively judged or even unable to express themselves well. These emotional barriers reduce students' willingness to speak and negatively impact their confidence. Moreover, it hinders Malaysian ESL students' ability to communicate effectively. At the secondary school level, these challenges are particularly noticeable. Previous studies have revealed that the lower the speaking anxiety, the higher the self-confidence along with better language performance. However, in the Malaysian secondary classroom context, classroom instruction is often examination-oriented and teacher-centred, which limits authentic communicative opportunities for Malaysian secondary school learners to learn and use spoken English.

New resources that support language learning in more engaging and approachable ways have surfaced because of the expanding use of technology in education. One such tool is ChatGPT, an AI-powered conversational agent developed by OpenAI. Recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI) have opened new possibilities for language learning. Among these technologies, ChatGPT has emerged as an AI-powered conversational tool that can simulate human-like interactions, along with providing learners with personalised and instant responses. ChatGPT allows learners to practice English by themselves, where they can practice speaking repeatedly at their own pace within a low-pressure and non-judgemental environment, which shows distinction from traditional classroom settings. Earlier studies claimed that AI-assisted language learning can boost learners' confidence, vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and speaking performance, including reducing language anxiety.

Although the educational potential of ChatGPT has received growing significant attention, the existing studies have mostly been focused on higher education or general AI applications. There is still a lack of research into Malaysian secondary school ESL learners' perceptions of the use of ChatGPT specially for lowering speaking anxiety. Furthermore, relatively little research has been conducted into learners' own experience and perceptions of the usefulness of AI conversational tools for speaking practice. This lack of research calls for a need to explore whether ChatGPT is perceived as an effective tool to reduce speaking anxiety among Malaysian secondary school learners.

Thereby, the purpose of this study is to investigate Malaysian secondary school ESL learners' perceptions on the use of ChatGPT to reduce speaking anxiety. Specifically, the study examines the change of learners' speaking anxiety after participating in ChatGPT-based speaking activities, identifies which dimension of the speaking anxiety is the most affected, and explores learners' perception of ChatGPT's usefulness and ease of use for speaking practice. To address these aims, the following questions are posed:

1. Is there a difference in ESL learners' speaking anxiety levels before and after engaging in ChatGPT-based speaking activities?
2. Which aspects of speaking anxiety (e.g., communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation) show the greatest change following the use of ChatGPT?
3. How do ESL students perceive the usefulness and ease of use of ChatGPT in helping them reduce speaking anxiety?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Speaking Anxiety Among ESL learners

Speaking anxiety has always been recognized as one of the most important obstacles in oral communication in L2 learning. Students who speak English as an additional language tend to be nervous, afraid of making mistakes, and concerned about negative evaluation when speaking English, which decreases their desire to be involved in classroom discourse. Studies have shown that the higher the level of speaking anxiety, the less confident the students are and their language performance is also lower. In the Malaysian context, Kashinathan and Abdul Aziz (2021) reported that many secondary school learners are not given opportunities to engage in authentic speaking due to the teaching and learning in the classroom being mostly examination-oriented and teacher-centred. Likewise, Sudarmanto, Patahuddin, and Lestari (2023) found that students tend to get nervous when they are asked to speak spontaneously in public.

Several classroom-based strategies have been suggested for the reduction of speaking anxiety such as supportive teacher feedback, familiar speaking topics, collaborative learning activities, etc. Most of the previous research, however, is dedicated to the teacher-led approach and barely mentions technology-mediated or independent speaking practice. This means other strategies need to be examined that could offer learners a low stress speaking environment.

AI-Assisted Language Learning and ChatGPT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has brought new language learning opportunities in recent years. Conversational AI tools like ChatGPT can generate human-like responses to students' questions, offer tailored practice, and enable flexible access to speaking exercises. AI tools have potential to help with vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, fluency, and speaking confidence, as well as mitigate the anxiety of being negatively evaluated by others (Woo & Choi, 2021; Wang, 2024).

ChatGPT is especially interesting because it enables students to engage in their own independent and repeated practice of English in a non-judgemental setting. It provides a tool that can be used at the learner's speed and allows them to try out language without the pressure of peer evaluation, unlike traditional classroom speaking activities. Additionally, Mogavi et al. (2024) emphasized that AI conversational tools can enhance student engagement and participation, particularly for those who are shy to speak in class. However, questions still exist about how accurately AI feedback works, whether or not it can understand local dialects, and whether or not it can offer emotional support as human teachers do. The restrictions highlight that AI is a tool that can complement, not replace, language learning.

Theoretical Framework and Research Gap

This study is informed by Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). According to the Affective Filter Hypothesis, high anxiety can block language learning, while low anxiety can promote language learning. The use of ChatGPT in this study can be beneficial for reducing learners' affective filters by offering them a supportive and stress-free speaking environment. TAM, however, is based on the fact that a learner's acceptance of a technology depends on their perception of the technology's usefulness and ease of use. These two constructs are of special interest to see whether students are able to use ChatGPT as a speaking practice tool.

Although the field of language learning has shown increased interest in using AI to assist language learning, there are still some gaps in the literature. First, the literature regarding ChatGPT and language learning has concentrated mainly on the tertiary or international context and not on the context of Secondary Schools in Malaysia. Second, there is a greater focus on the measurable results (e.g., test scores or gains in fluency) than on what learners themselves think and feel. Third, there is a lack of studies that involve mixed methods, which involve the use of both anxiety measurements and in-depth interviews with learners in the Malaysian ESL context. Hence, the aim of the present study is to fill these gaps by investigating the changes in speaking anxiety and the perceptions of the Malaysian secondary school ESL learners regarding the use of ChatGPT for speaking practice.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed-methods research design with a convergent parallel approach to investigate Malaysian secondary school ESL learners' perceptions of reducing speaking anxiety while using ChatGPT. The quantitative component used a single-group quasi-experimental pre-test – post-test design to investigate the differences in speaking anxiety of the learners before and after a four-week speaking intervention using ChatGPT. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with the learners to gain insights into their attitudes towards ChatGPT as a speaking practice tool. The use of both methods helped provide quantitative evidence of anxiety reduction along with rich insights into the learners' experiences.

The subjects were 30 lower secondary Malaysian secondary school ESL learners who were purposively selected. Qualitative data was obtained from 5 students who volunteered to share their experiences. The four-week intervention involved all participants in guided activities using ChatGPT to create speaking opportunities in a natural way without the stress of being in a classroom. The weekly activities emphasized everyday communication situations, such as self-introduction, ordering food, giving directions, and planning a trip.

The foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was adapted in this study and used as the quantitative instrument, the English Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (ELCAS). The instrument had the same 33 items, five-point Likert scale, and three anxiety dimensions (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation) as the original. Minor wording changes were made to make the text more relevant to Malaysian secondary school learners, e.g., English instead of foreign language. The instrument used in the qualitative research was a semi-structured interview protocol that was designed to capture the learners' perspectives about the usefulness and ease of using ChatGPT to alleviate speaking anxiety.

The questionnaire was expert-validated by two TESL senior secondary school teachers. A pilot study was carried out to locate ambiguous items and for clarity prior to the main data collection. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the ELCAS, and it yielded a 0.76, which is deemed acceptable. Credibility was supported by member checking for the qualitative portion, which allowed participants to verify their interpretation of the summary of interview responses, and by peer debriefing and triangulation for the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data collection was carried out in three phases. Participants then filled out the ELCAS as a pre-test prior to the intervention. They then engaged in structured speaking activities using ChatGPT for four weeks with the researcher's guidance, as illustrated in Figure 1.0. Students had a conversation with ChatGPT using typed written prompts, and then they read them aloud during

the role plays. This enabled students to practise their spoken English in the context of the ChatGPT text-based interface. At the end of the intervention, participants filled out the post-test questionnaire and then selected students were interviewed using a semi-structured interview (5-10 minutes). All ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity were respected throughout the study.

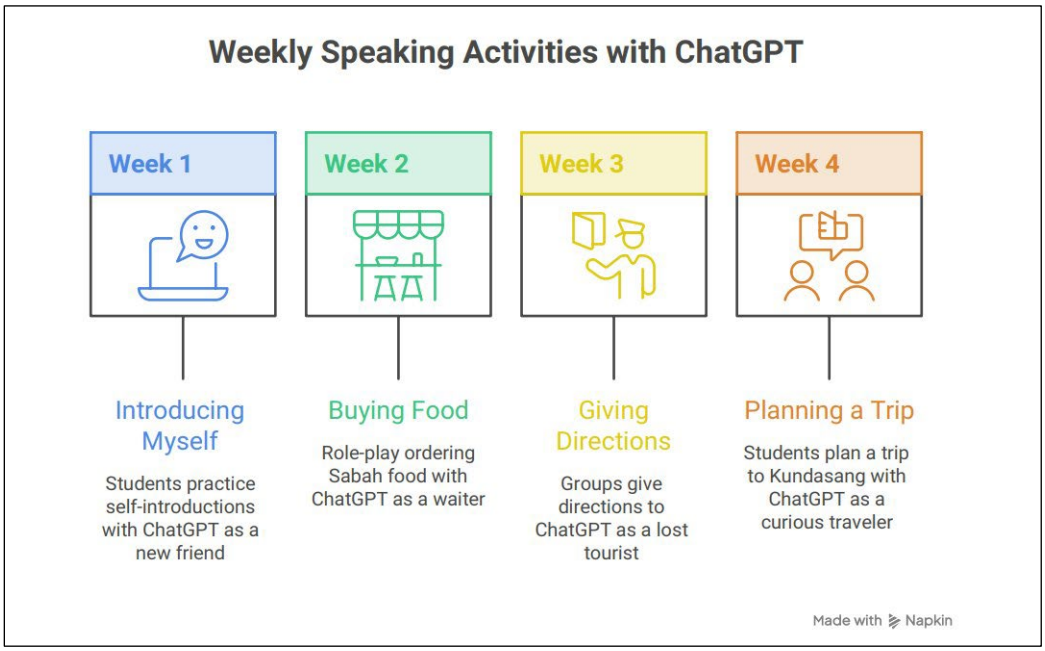

Figure 1.0: 4-Week ChatGPT Speaking Activities

IBM SPSS Statistics was used to analyse quantitative data. Paired-samples t-tests were conducted to see if there was a significant difference between pre-test and post-test speaking anxiety scores. Descriptive analyses were also conducted to determine the changes between the three dimensions of anxiety. Thematic analysis, a six-phase process developed by Braun and Clarke, was used to analyse the qualitative interview data, which included familiarisation, coding, theme identification, theme review, theme definition, and reporting. Finally, the findings of both quantitative and qualitative strands were triangulated to gain a holistic view of the learners' perception of ChatGPT and its effect on the reduction of speaking anxiety.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The study was designed in a mixed-methods approach to explore ESL learners' speaking anxiety before and after a four-week speaking intervention using ChatGPT in Malaysian secondary schools. Paired-samples t-tests were used for quantitative data analyses, and thematic data analyses were used for qualitative data. Findings are reported by each of the three research questions and then discussed and compared to the literature and theory.

Research Question 1: Overall Speaking Anxiety Before and After Intervention

To compare the overall speaking anxiety scores before and after the ChatGPT intervention, a paired-samples t-test was used after passing the normality test. Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the difference scores were normally distributed (*W = 0.963, p = 0.371*).

Results indicated a statistically significant improvement from pre-test (*M = 2.09, SD = 0.19*) to post-test (*M = 3.99, SD = 0.13*), *t(29) = -40.41, p < 0.001*. The results showed that learners had a significant decrease in their speaking anxiety after using ChatGPT, with higher scores representing lower speaking anxiety and increased confidence. This effect size was very large (*Cohen's d = -7.38*), representing a very large change from pre-test to post-test. This large effect size may partly reflect the similarity of participants' responses and the small sample size (*N = 30*) as well as the small range of post-test scores.

Table 1
Paired Samples Statistics for Overall Speaking Anxiety

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Mean_Pre	2.0899	30	.19124	.03491
	Mean_Post	3.9949	30	.13054	.02383

Table 1.0: Overall Paired Samples Statistics

Table 2
Paired Samples Test for Overall Speaking Anxiety

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Mean_Pre - Mean_Post	-1.90505	.25820	.04714	-2.00147	-1.80864	-40.412	29	<.001	<.001

Table 2.0: Overall Paired Samples Test

The results show that learners' speaking anxiety decreased significantly after the ChatGPT activities. This reflects Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that if language acquisition is to take place, then the affective filter must be lowered. The findings suggest that the ChatGPT activities may have lowered learners' affective filter through an environment of low pressure and self-paced speech. This is consistent with prior studies suggesting language learning aids powered by AI can help alleviate performance anxiety and boost practice opportunities, fostering a more positive attitude among learners (Woo & Choi, 2021). The very high effect size also indicates that the rather intense training with no judgmental practice may have helped to boost the confidence of the learners (Luo & Lyu, 2024; Nuñez et al., 2025).

Research Question 2: Changes to Dimensions of Speaking Anxiety Brought by ChatGPT Activities

Communication Apprehension

A significant improvement was found between the pre-test (*M = 1.64, SD = 0.32*) and post-test scores (*M = 4.30, SD = 0.19*), *t(29) = -36.10, p < 0.001*. The effect size was extremely high (*d = -6.59*), suggesting that learners' communication apprehension decreased significantly after the ChatGPT activities. This implies that learners' nervousness and lack of confidence in using English language may have been reduced through repeated exposure to speaking practice in a low-pressure situation. These findings are consistent with previous studies reporting a negative correlation between anxiety and self-confidence, with low anxiety levels correlated with high levels of self-confidence. (Suparlan, 2021).

Table 3

Paired Samples Statistics for Communication Apprehension

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_CA	1.6381	30	.31552	.05761
	Post_CA	4.3048	30	.18658	.03406

Table 3.0: Paired Samples Statistics for Communication Apprehension

Table 4

Paired Samples Test for Communication Apprehension

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre_CA - Post_CA	-2.66667	.40464	.07388	-2.81776	-2.51557	-36.096	29	<.001	<.001

Table 4.0: Paired Samples Test for Communication Apprehension

Fear of Negative Evaluation

A statistically significant increase was observed from the pre-test (*M = 1.50, SD = 0.26*) to the post-test (*M = 4.26, SD = 0.24*), *t(29) = -43.88, p < 0.001*, with an extremely large effect size (*d = -8.01*). This dimension had the largest gain on the three subscales, meaning students' fear of being evaluated by others for their English-speaking decreased significantly. This outcome was reinforced by the interview results, where the interviewed participants shared the belief that ChatGPT does not laugh at, criticize, or negatively assess their errors. The non-evaluative pressure seems to have increased the willingness to communicate (Nuñez et al., 2025).

Table 5

Paired Samples Statistics for Fear of Negative Evaluation

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_FNE	1.5048	30	.25647	.04682
	Post_FNE	4.2619	30	.24046	.04390

Table 5.0: Paired Samples Statistics for Fear of Negative Evaluation

Table 6

Paired Samples Test for Fear of Negative Evaluation

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower	Upper	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre_FNE - Post_FNE	-2.75714	.34415	.06283	-2.88565	-2.62864	-43.881	29	<.001	<.001

Table 6.0: Paired Samples Test for Fear of Negative Evaluation

Test Anxiety

Results also showed a significant improvement from the pre-test ($M = 2.47, SD = 0.23$) to the post-test ($M = 3.78, SD = 0.16$), $t(29) = -21.94, p < 0.001$, with a large effect size ($d = -4.01$). The degree of change was slightly lower than for the other two dimensions, but the results are still significant and show that there was a definite improvement in performance-related anxiety. Learners indicated that they were less pressed when speaking and were more willing to try when not sure of the right answer. This indicates that by using ChatGPT, students can learn to think differently about errors as a natural component of language learning, which decreases perfectionism and the fear of failure (Walter, 2024).

Table 7

Paired Samples Statistics for Test Anxiety

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_TA	2.4719	30	.22982	.04196
	Post_TA	3.7825	30	.16397	.02994

Table 7.0: Paired Samples Statistics for Test Anxiety

Table 8

Paired Samples Test for Test Anxiety

					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Pair 1	Pre_TA - Post_TA	-1.31053	.32718	.05974	-1.43270	-1.18835	-21.939	29	<.001	<.001

Table 8.0: Paired Samples Test for Test Anxiety

The overall results showed that the three subscales all significantly reduced speaking anxiety, with the subscale fear of negative evaluation having the greatest effect. The outcomes suggest that the ChatGPT activities created an encouraging and non-threatening environment, encouraging students to speak in English with greater confidence. The combination of these findings is consistent with both the Affective Filter Hypothesis and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggest that lower anxiety reduces affective barriers to using language and that a positive user experience facilitates acceptance and continued use of ChatGPT.

Research Question 3: Learners' Perceptions of ChatGPT in Reducing Speaking Anxiety

To answer Research Question 3, the data from the interviews were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. The responses of the participants revealed three major themes related to their experiences using ChatGPT for speaking practice: (1) ChatGPT creates a non-judgemental space that alleviates speaking anxiety; (2) Repetitive and self-paced speaking practice increases speaking confidence; and (3) Speaking confidence gained from ChatGPT can be transferred to real-life speaking contexts.

Theme 1: ChatGPT creates an environment that is non-judgmental and helps to alleviate speaking anxiety.

The participants expressed that their experience with ChatGPT was less stressful than having to interact in English in the classroom. The analysis revealed common codes including less nervous, absence of judgement, freedom to make mistakes and greater comfort in speaking English. These were sorted into the theme of a non-judgemental learning environment.

Student 1 explained:

"I'm not scared people will laugh at me, I feel less nervous because ChatGPT is not a real person."

Similarly, Student 5 shared:

"Actually, it makes me feel less stressed out, I don't have to think about people judging me."

The answers indicate that students felt that using ChatGPT was a psychologically safe space to practice English. The ability to chat freely, without the pressure of fear of negative reaction from

peers or teacher, was particularly beneficial in classroom situations where talk was often inhibited by such concerns. Because of the lack of social pressure, the participants were allowed to try out the English language and make errors in an unselfconscious way, which helped to promote their English-speaking comfort.

This theme relates to the quantitative results, especially the significant decrease in the Fear of Negative Evaluation dimension. It also strengthens Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis which suggests that reducing anxiety helps to promote language learning by making the learner more willing to communicate (Luo & Lyu, 2024).

Theme 2: Repetition and Self-Paced Practice Enhances Speaking Confidence

The other very prominent theme was the opportunity to engage in repetitive and self-paced speaking practice. Codes that were repeated were practice, learning new words, immediate feedback, and practice at one's own pace.

Student 3 commented:

"As I can practise at any time and can repeat if I get it wrong." (Perceived Ease of Use)

The response is related to Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) because the student points to the flexibility and ease of use in the system. The flexibility of being able to use it anytime and practice mistakes repeatedly suggests that ChatGPT is user-friendly and affordable for self-study speaking.

Likewise, Student 2 explained:

"ChatGPT gives me ideas on how to continue my sentence, sometimes I don't know how to do it, so I can learn new words." (Perceived Usefulness)

This statement reflects Perceived Usefulness (PU), by highlighting the functional value of using ChatGPT to boost language production by students. Learners' experience of sentence support and vocabulary learning indicates that they feel ChatGPT provides support in their own language, directly improving their speaking skills.

From the answers, students perceived that ChatGPT was a friend who spoke in English, and gave them constant opportunities to practice English without interruption or embarrassment. Repeating sentences and having immediate help allowed learners to slowly start developing their vocabulary, sentence construction and confidence (Wang, 2024).
This finding is consistent with the quantitative results which revealed significant reductions in the Communication Apprehension scale, thus suggesting that the representative independent practice had a positive effect on speaking confidence.

Importantly, both Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) and Perceived Usefulness (PU) were included in the responses of the participants, thus reinforcing the fundamental assumption of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that technology acceptance was found to be dependent on both

perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. In the current study, both constructs seem to work together in influencing students' positive interaction with ChatGPT in their speaking practice.

Theme 3: Building confidence with the help of ChatGPT and transferring it to real-life speaking scenarios.

The third theme emphasizes how participants felt the confidence gained from ChatGPT practice was applicable to real communication situations.The third theme focused on how participants believed that their confidence from ChatGPT practice translated into actual situations. Some of the codes that were found repeatedly were: more participation in class, better pronunciation, being more confident in answering teachers, and willingness to speak English.
Student 1 stated:

"Normally, I was afraid to answer in English in the lesson, but now, with ChatGPT, I'm beginning to answer simple questions in English more.

Similarly, Student 5 shared:

"Recently during a presentation I could speak longer in English without stopping too much like before."

Students' answers suggest that ChatGPT served as a scaffolding tool that boosted their confidence in communicating in real life. The participants acknowledged the ongoing significance of classroom speaking in fostering authentic communication, but believed that the incorporation of ChatGPT augmented their ability to engage in classroom discussions, presentations, and everyday communication.

The theme follows up the quantitative results by illustrating the changes in speaking anxiety and confidence which were manifested in learners' classroom behaviour. Participants did not consider ChatGPT to be a substitute for in-person communication, but rather a resource to help ease the transition from private practice to real-world English. The shift of trust into actual classroom engagement within the TAM lens suggests that learners may intend to keep using the technology, as they indicated their readiness to persist in using ChatGPT to help prepare for real speaking situations and to aid them in making sense of their English communication in real contexts (Nunez et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine changes in Malaysian secondary school ESL learners' speaking anxiety and their perceptions related to the usefulness of the ChatGPT speaking activities. The quantitative data alongside the qualitative interview data suggest that ChatGPT speaking activities were followed by lower speaking anxiety and more confidence among the learners.

The quantitative findings showed that there was a significant decrease in the overall speaking anxiety after the intervention. Changes from pre-test to post-test were significant in all three measures of speaking anxiety: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The results showed that the greatest improvement was in the emotional barrier

of fear of negative evaluation, indicating that the non-judgemental characteristics of ChatGPT were significant in lowering the emotional barriers of learners. These qualitative results also aligned with the quantitative data, with students generally reporting that they felt more relaxed, less concerned about making mistakes, and more comfortable speaking English when using ChatGPT.

In conclusion, the study suggests that ChatGPT may be a useful aid to reduce speaking anxiety as it can create a safe environment for speaking, allowing students to speak freely, and make speaking a less stressful activity. It allows learners to speak English again in the future without being embarrassed and gives them more confidence and willingness to speak English. The results further indicate that the practice with ChatGPT can build confidence that may be applicable in real classroom interactive scenarios, indicating its potential pedagogical value in ESL classrooms.

While these are positive outcomes, it is important to note there are some limitations. One limitation is that that the study was done with a relatively small number of respondents from one secondary school, which restricts the generalisability of the findings of the study. Furthermore, self-reported data may also be biased because the participants' answers might not accurately represent their levels of anxiety or performance in speaking. In addition, the four-week intervention period may not have been long enough to assess potential long-term effects of ChatGPT usage on long-term reductions in speaking confidence and anxiety. The study also had no control group, so the changes cannot be attributed to ChatGPT alone, and the researcher's guidance and the students' wish to give positive answers may have influenced the results.

Further studies are encouraged with greater and more varied samples in various educational environments to address these limitations. Further research could involve longitudinal studies to analyse the longer-term implications of ChatGPT for speaking anxiety and language development. In addition, comparative studies with other AI based or traditional speaking interventions could be conducted in the future to assess comparative effectiveness. Other language-related outcomes, including fluency, pronunciation accuracy and interactional competence, could also be explored in the researchers' investigation for a more comprehensive view of the AI-assisted language learning.

Furthermore, future research could explore moderating factors like learners' skill level, personality traits, and learning styles to understand how these factors impact the success of using ChatGPT and alleviate speaking anxiety. This would help to create a more nuanced understanding of how AI tools can be modified to suit varying learner needs.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

Author Contribution

The author conducted fieldwork, prepared the literature review, methodology, data entry, performed statistical analysis, and interpreted results.

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Ethics Statement

All ethical standards were adhered to in the research. Everyone participated voluntarily and confidentiality was maintained during the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before data collection and their privacy protected by anonymising their identities.

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