The Implication of AI Chatbots Offering Text-based Conversation Practice in Second Language

Teaching and Learning

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Chatbots are widely applied in second language teaching and second language learning (SLT and SLL). Chatbots can reduce teaching preparation time, increase students' self-efficacy, and improve their overall language skills（Kohnke, 2023). However, chatbots also have weaknesses. This reflection tries to explain how to effectively use chatbots to supplement SLT and SLL and discuss chatbots' benefits and deficiencies. Assistant (part of Poe) and Copilot are the chatbots discussed.

The application of chatbots in second language learning

Students can learn L2 personally and interactively. Chatbots are introduced within classrooms and used by students not just in classes. When interacting with chatbots, students feel less nervous than with humans. Positive psychology develops students' SLL (Jeon, 2022). When students provide input, chatbots can detect linguistic errors and give feedback. This approach increases students' confidence and motivation, which is better than direct correction. Besides, chatbots' responses are accessible and multimodal, motivating students' interest in SLL. Chatbots' responses also adapt to students' language proficiency. They reply to low-intermediate learners with easier and more common vocabulary and grammar. Students can compare chatbot feedback with what they input to learn the difference and improve their language competence (Kim, 2024).

The application of chatbots in second language teaching

Teachers can ask chatbots to prepare for teaching, including designing teaching plans and creating knowledge graphs, which decreases preparation time. It is beneficial for teachers to gather and summarize teaching resources through chatbots, which can provide more choices for teachers to select. Teachers will be motivated to change their teaching approaches based on students' preferences. Chatbots can help teachers design questions in teaching tasks or occasional tests. Teachers can put teaching preparation documents into the conversation with chatbots to make

chatbots' responses more specific and satisfy students' personalized needs.

The ways of effectively using chatbots in SLL and SLT

Prompts are essential to make chatbot responses satisfy learners' needs. Users should provide background, role, task, and request to chatbots in prompts. Chatbots can act as partners delivering learning content (student-content interaction), tutors providing guidance and recommendation (student-teacher interaction), and knowledgeable friends (student-student interaction).

Below are four prompts using Assistant (poe.com) and Copilot. Which do you think are more effective for L2 learners?

e.g.: Assistant (poe.com): for A2 level students (basic users of language):

1. Prompt: Please act as my English conversation partner.

The Assistant chatbot replies with "Of course! I'd be happy to act as your English conversation partner. What would you like to talk about?". It repeats and asks about users' needs.

Assistant: for C2 level students (proficient users of language):

2. Prompt: Please talk with me to teach me skills.

Users should offer context and be specific in their prompts. Otherwise, sometimes the output can be vague.

Copilot (bing.com): for A2 level students:

3. Prompt: Can you assist me with learning English?

It replies with other non-directly related content, such as providing tips to improve language skills.

Copilot: for C2 level students:

4. Prompt: You are a tutor in English and please teach me.

This chatbot provides English basics that users may not need. Besides, its language seems like unnatural robotic voices, and replies may result from combining online resources.

These chatbot responses are about helping learners acquire L2. Among the four prompts, I think the first prompt is the best because it provides specific context----English conversation and the role----partner. Besides, the chatbot's answer satisfies users' needs, showing that the prompt is effective. Copilot chatbots can provide expansive learning strategies and improve learners' language skills by offering tips and English basics. It provides a "learn more" link for learners to refer to, offering sources for its responses. It also has online search, text, and image generation and can show image results. However, these examples show that chatbot responses sometimes are too general and do not satisfy students' specific needs. It would be better if teachers design chatbots more applicable to their classes by inputting their teaching materials and students' status.

Benefits of interacting with chatbots

Learners' overall L2 knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) and skills (writing/listening/reading/speaking) can be improved by interacting with chatbots. Their comprehensive skills and subject content can also be developed. Students can practice English skills at any time they like, which not only satisfies students' need for a self-learning pace but also improves learners' engagement.

Besides, their learning motivation, self-efficacy, and emotion are deepened.

e.g.: *Your sentence is almost correct! Great effort! Keep practicing, and your English skills will continue to improve!* This example is about chatbots' agreement with learners, which enhances learners' confidence and engagement. This way benefits introverted students who are nervous about communicating in L2.

Students can explain their understanding of materials to chatbots to help them consolidate what they learn in classes and prepare for other tasks.

Teachers can ask chatbots for ideas about designing and updating courses to extend the formative assessment to improve learner engagement. Besides, they can assess students' learning status by asking chatbots to summarize the content of student-to-chatbots interactions. Teachers can provide learners' practice to chatbots to ask for ways to expand learning. Preparation time will largely decrease and they can have more time to innovate their teaching approach and content.

Weakness of chatbots

Though chatbots are effective in SLT and SLL, learners also need teachers' guidance. In terms of ethical problems, teachers should control the time and degree of chatbot use. Sometimes, chatbot responses are too mechanical and unrelated to what students need. To solve this problem, teachers can upload teaching materials, students' assignments, and situations to create a database to design simple chatbots based on the previous model. Besides, due to the various resources chatbots provide, learners' cognitive load will increase. Teachers need to guide students in selecting the most useful information.

Chatbots are increasingly being adopted in language learning and teaching. Correct prompts can make chatbot responses more effective. Through chatbots, students' language proficiency and positive psychology can be improved and teachers' preparation time can be decreased. However, sometimes chatbots cannot satisfy users' needs and then teachers need to design more personalized chatbots and guide their students.

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