



Enhancing Students' Communication Skills through AI-Assisted Role-Play Using ChatGPT in an English for Hospitality Business Course: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in language education has created new opportunities for enhancing students' communication skills through interactive learning environments. This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT in enhancing students' communication skills in an English for Hospitality Business course. The study also explored students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities. A case study research design was employed in this study. The participants consisted of 56 undergraduate students enrolled in an English for Hospitality Business course at a university in Thailand. The research instruments included AI-assisted role-play activities, a communication skills assessment rubric, and a questionnaire measuring students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in learning activities. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, while qualitative responses were analyzed using content analysis. The results revealed that students demonstrated a high level of communication performance in AI-assisted role-play activities, particularly in interactional skills and appropriateness of language use. The findings also indicated that students had highly positive perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT as a learning tool. Many students reported that ChatGPT helped them practice English communication more effectively, increased their confidence in speaking English, and made learning activities more engaging. The findings suggest that AI-assisted role-play can serve as an effective instructional strategy for enhancing communication skills in English for Specific Purposes courses, particularly in hospitality-related contexts.

Keywords: AI-assisted learning, ChatGPT, Communication skills, Role-play,
English for Hospitality Business

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly influenced various fields, including education. AI-powered technologies have increasingly been integrated into language learning environments to support students' learning experiences and provide more interactive learning opportunities. Among these technologies, conversational AI tools such as ChatGPT have gained considerable attention due to their ability to simulate human-like interactions and generate contextually appropriate responses. These capabilities allow language learners to engage in meaningful conversations and practice language skills in simulated real-world situations (Kasneci et al., 2023).

Communication skills are particularly important for students studying in Business English programs. In the hospitality industry, employees are expected to interact effectively with international guests, respond to various service requests, and manage customer interactions professionally. As a result, English language courses designed for business English students should focus on developing practical communication skills that reflect authentic workplace contexts. English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, such as English for Hospitality Business, aim to equip learners with the language skills necessary for professional communication in service-oriented settings (Basturkmen, 2010).

One effective instructional strategy for developing communication skills in language classrooms is role-play. Role-play activities allow students to simulate real-life situations and practice language use in meaningful and contextualized ways. Through role-play, learners can develop fluency, improve interactional competence, and gain confidence in using the target language (Ladousse, 1987). In hospitality-related courses, role-play activities can be designed to represent common service situations, such as greeting guests, handling reservations, responding to customer inquiries, and dealing with complaints.

With the advancement of AI technologies, role-play activities can be further enhanced through the integration of conversational AI tools. AI-assisted role-play enables learners to interact with AI-generated responses that simulate authentic communication scenarios. This type of interaction can provide students with additional opportunities to practice communication skills beyond traditional classroom interactions (Huang et al., 2023). Furthermore, AI tools such as ChatGPT can provide instant responses and diverse conversational scenarios, which may help learners improve their language proficiency and communicative competence.

Despite the increasing interest in the use of AI in language education, research examining the integration of ChatGPT into role-play activities within English for Specific Purposes contexts remains limited. In particular, few studies have explored the use of AI-assisted role-play for developing communication skills in hospitality-related English courses. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the use of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT to enhance students' communication

skills in an English for Hospitality Business course. Additionally, the study explores students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT as a learning tool in role-play activities.

Research Objectives

1. To investigate the effectiveness of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT in enhancing students' communication skills in an English for Hospitality Business course.
2. To explore students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities for hospitality communication practice.

Literature Review

Artificial Intelligence in Language Learning

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed language education in recent years. AI technologies have introduced new opportunities for interactive and personalized learning experiences that support language acquisition in both formal and informal learning environments. Among the emerging AI technologies, large language models such as ChatGPT have attracted considerable attention due to their ability to generate human-like responses and facilitate interactive communication with learners.

Recent studies suggest that AI tools can support language learning by providing immediate feedback, generating authentic language input, and allowing learners to practice language skills in simulated conversational contexts (Kasneci et al., 2023). In particular, generative AI tools enable students to engage in dialogue-based learning activities that encourage active participation and communicative practice. As a result, AI-based language learning environments have been increasingly adopted in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom.

Several studies have also highlighted the positive impact of AI tools on students' language learning experiences. For example, Li et al. (2024) found that ChatGPT can support English language learning by providing detailed feedback and generating language examples that assist learners in improving their writing skills. Similarly, research examining AI-assisted speaking practice suggests that AI tools can increase learners' willingness to communicate while reducing language anxiety during communication activities (Wang & Liu, 2024). These findings indicate that AI-powered learning environments can create supportive conditions that facilitate language development.

In addition to improving language proficiency, AI tools can also enhance students' learning engagement and motivation. Interactive AI systems provide learners with opportunities to practice language skills at their own pace and receive immediate responses during conversations. This type of interaction allows learners to experiment with language use in a low-pressure learning environment, which can promote confidence and autonomous learning.

Role-Play Activities in Language Learning

Role-play has long been recognized as an effective pedagogical strategy in language education, particularly for developing communication skills. Role-play activities simulate real-life situations and allow learners to practice language use in meaningful contexts. Through these activities, learners can practice interactional skills, improve fluency, and develop pragmatic competence. In communicative language teaching, role-play activities are widely used to provide opportunities for students to apply language knowledge in realistic situations. By assuming specific roles, learners engage in authentic communication and develop the ability to respond appropriately in different social contexts. This experiential learning approach enables students to practice language in ways that reflect real-world communication demands.

In hospitality-related language courses, role-play activities are particularly important because students must develop communication skills relevant to service encounters. Situations such as greeting guests, taking reservations, providing information, and handling customer complaints require learners to use appropriate language strategies in professional contexts. Therefore, incorporating role-play activities into hospitality English courses can help students develop the communication competencies required in the service industry. Recent studies have also emphasized that role-play activities can promote student engagement and collaborative learning. When learners participate in simulated communication scenarios, they actively negotiate meaning and respond to conversational cues. This process contributes to the development of communicative competence, which is an essential component of language learning (Wang & Liu, 2024).

AI-Assisted Role-Play in Language Education

With the emergence of conversational AI technologies, traditional role-play activities can be enhanced through AI-assisted learning environments. AI-assisted role-play allows students to interact with AI systems that simulate real-life communication partners, thereby providing additional opportunities for language practice. Unlike traditional role-play activities that require peer interaction, AI-based simulations allow learners to practice conversations independently and repeatedly. Research has shown that AI-driven role-play activities can provide valuable support for language learning. For instance, Tan and Ismail (2025) found that combining ChatGPT voice interactions with traditional role-play activities helped ESL learners improve their speaking confidence and engagement during language practice. The study also reported that learners perceived AI interactions as a safe environment for practicing English without fear of making mistakes.

Similarly, research on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learning has demonstrated the potential of ChatGPT for generating realistic communication scenarios. Jordán Enamorado (2025) examined the integration of ChatGPT into English for Tourism courses and found that the AI tool effectively supported language learning by simulating real-world dialogues and providing instant

feedback during role-play tasks. The study concluded that AI-assisted activities can enhance students' language proficiency and engagement in ESP classrooms. Furthermore, AI technologies are increasingly being explored within hospitality and tourism education. Recent research suggests that AI tools can transform hospitality education by providing personalized learning experiences, interactive simulations, and training opportunities that reflect real-world industry scenarios (Buhalis & Leung, 2024). These developments highlight the growing importance of integrating AI technologies into hospitality-related courses to prepare students for technology-driven service environments.

AI Integration in English Language Learning Research

Recent studies have also explored how AI integration can support various aspects of English language learning, including vocabulary acquisition, writing development, and communication skills. For example, Khlakheang and Cherngroongroj (2025) investigated the use of AI tools to support vocabulary learning among Thai university students. Their study revealed that AI integration can encourage students to use diverse vocabulary learning strategies and promote autonomous language learning. The findings also suggest that AI technologies can serve as effective learning support tools in higher education language classrooms.

The growing body of research on AI-assisted language learning indicates that integrating AI technologies into language education can enhance students' learning experiences and communication skills. However, despite increasing interest in the educational applications of AI, limited research has focused on the use of AI-assisted role-play activities within English for Hospitality Business courses.

Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap by investigating how AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT can enhance students' communication skills in an English for Hospitality Business course. Additionally, the study explores students' perceptions of using ChatGPT as a learning tool in role-play activities.

Methodology

Three research instruments were used in this study to collect data:

Research Design

This study employed a case study research design to investigate the implementation of AI-assisted role-play activities using ChatGPT in an English for Hospitality Business course. A case study approach was considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to examine a specific educational context in depth and explore how a particular instructional strategy influences students' communication skills within a real classroom setting. The study focused on the integration of ChatGPT into role-play activities designed to simulate authentic hospitality communication scenarios. The research aimed to explore both the effectiveness of AI-assisted role-play in improving students' communication skills and students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT as a learning tool.

Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 56 undergraduate students enrolled in an English for Hospitality Business course at a private university in Thailand during the first semester of 2025 academic year in which the study was conducted. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they were students who were currently taking the course and participated in the AI-assisted role-play activities as part of their regular classroom learning. The students had intermediate levels of English proficiency (B1) and were studying in Business English programs. Since communication with international guests is an essential skill in the hospitality industry, the course aimed to develop students' English communication skills through practical activities that simulate real-life service situations. Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed about the purpose of the research before the data collection process.

Research Instruments

Three research instruments were used in this study to collect data:

1. AI-Assisted Role-Play Activities

AI-assisted role-play activities were designed to simulate communication scenarios commonly encountered in the hospitality industry. The activities required students to interact with ChatGPT in order to practice communication with simulated guests or customers. Examples of role-play scenarios included: Greeting hotel guests at the front desk, Handling hotel reservations, providing information about hotel services, Responding to guest requests, and Handling customer complaints. Students used ChatGPT to simulate guest interactions and practice appropriate responses in English. These role-play activities allowed students to practice communication skills in realistic contexts.

2. Communication Skills Assessment Rubric

Students' communication performance during role-play activities was assessed using a communication skills rubric developed by the researcher. The rubric focused on several aspects of communication, including: Fluency, Pronunciation and clarity, Appropriateness of language use, and Interactional skills. Each criterion was evaluated using a five-point rating scale, ranging from 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent). The rubric was used to assess students' communication performance during the role-play sessions.

3. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to collect students' perceptions regarding the use of ChatGPT in AI-assisted role-play activities. The questionnaire consisted of two parts:

Part 1: Demographic Information

This section collected basic information about the participants, such as gender, year of study, and previous experience using AI tools for language learning.

Part 2: Students' Perceptions toward AI-Assisted Role-Play

This section included Likert-scale items measuring students' perceptions of the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities. The items focused on aspects such as: usefulness of ChatGPT for

communication practice, ease of use, confidence in speaking English, and engagement in learning activities

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Open-ended questions were also included to allow students to provide additional comments regarding their learning experiences with ChatGPT.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted over several weeks during the first semester of 2025 academic year in the English for Hospitality Business course. First, the instructor introduced students to the use of ChatGPT as a tool for practicing communication through role-play activities. Students were provided with instructions on how to interact with ChatGPT and use it to simulate hospitality communication scenarios. During the course, students participated in AI-assisted role-play activities in which they interacted with ChatGPT to practice English communication in hospitality contexts. These activities allowed students to practice responding to guest requests, answering questions, and handling service situations. Students' communication performance during the role-play activities was assessed using the communication skills rubric. At the end of the learning activities, students were asked to complete a questionnaire to provide feedback on their experiences using ChatGPT for role-play practice.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, to examine students' perceptions of the AI-assisted role-play activities. Qualitative data from open-ended responses were analyzed using content analysis to identify common themes related to students' learning experiences and perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in communication practice. The results of the analysis were used to determine whether the integration of ChatGPT into role-play activities contributed to the development of students' communication skills in the English for Hospitality Business course.

Results

This section presents the findings of the study on the implementation of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT in an English for Hospitality Business course. The results are organized according to the research objectives: (1) to investigate the effectiveness of AI-assisted role-play in enhancing students' communication skills and (2) to explore students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities. The results are presented in two main sections: students' communication skills during AI-assisted role-play activities and students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT as a learning tool. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of students' communication skills during the role-play activities.

Table 1 Students' Communication Skills in AI-Assisted Role-Play Activities (n = 56)

Communication Skills	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Fluency	4.12	0.63	High
Pronunciation and Clarity	4.05	0.58	High
Appropriateness of Language Use	4.18	0.61	High
Interactional Skills	4.21	0.55	High
Overall	4.14	0.59	High

As shown in Table 1, the overall mean score of students' communication skills was 4.14, which indicates a high level of communication performance during the AI-assisted role-play activities. Among the four assessed aspects, interactional skills received the highest mean score ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.55$). This result suggests that students were able to respond appropriately to simulated guest interactions and maintain conversational flow during the role-play activities. In hospitality communication, interactional competence is particularly important because service staff must respond effectively to customer requests and maintain professional communication. The second highest mean score was appropriateness of language use ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.61$). This indicates that students were generally able to use appropriate expressions and polite language when communicating in hospitality-related scenarios such as greeting guests, providing information, and responding to customer inquiries. Students' fluency also demonstrated a high level of performance ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.63$). The results suggest that the AI-assisted role-play activities provided opportunities for students to practice speaking more continuously during simulated conversations. The lowest mean score among the four criteria was pronunciation and clarity ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.58$), although it still remained within the high level of interpretation. This finding may indicate that while students were able to communicate effectively, some minor pronunciation difficulties were still present. Overall, the results indicate that the integration of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT allowed students to practice realistic hospitality communication scenarios, which contributed to the development of their communication skills in the English for Hospitality Business course.

Students' Perceptions toward AI-Assisted Role-Play Using ChatGPT

Students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities were examined using a questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items. The questionnaire used a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities.

Table 2 Students' Perceptions toward AI-Assisted Role-Play Using ChatGPT (n = 56)

Statements	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. ChatGPT helped me practice English communication effectively.	4.32	0.64	Very High
2. ChatGPT made role-play activities more interesting.	4.28	0.67	Very High
3. ChatGPT helped me understand hospitality communication situations.	4.25	0.66	Very High
4. Using ChatGPT increased my confidence in speaking English.	4.21	0.69	High
5. ChatGPT provided useful responses during conversations.	4.35	0.60	Very High
6. ChatGPT helped me learn new vocabulary related to hospitality.	4.18	0.71	High
7. Using ChatGPT for language learning in the future.	4.30	0.65	Very High
Overall Mean	4.27	0.66	Very High

As presented in Table 2, the overall mean score of students' perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT was 4.27, indicating a very high level of agreement among the participants. The highest-rated item was ChatGPT provided useful responses during conversations ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.60$). This finding suggests that students perceived ChatGPT as a helpful conversational partner that could simulate realistic interactions during role-play activities. Another highly rated item was ChatGPT helped me practice English communication effectively ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.64$). This result indicates that students believed the AI-assisted role-play activities provided meaningful opportunities to practice communication skills. Students also strongly agreed that ChatGPT made role-play activities more interesting ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.67$), suggesting that the integration of AI technology increased students' engagement in classroom activities. Additionally, the item Using ChatGPT increased my confidence in speaking English received a high mean score ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.69$). This finding suggests that interacting with ChatGPT may help reduce students' anxiety when practicing English communication. Overall, the findings indicate that students had highly positive perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities and considered it a valuable tool for improving their communication skills.

Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Responses

To further explore students' experiences with AI-assisted role-play, open-ended responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using content analysis. Three main themes emerged from the qualitative data.

1. Increased Opportunities for Communication Practice

Many students reported that interacting with ChatGPT provided additional opportunities to practice English communication beyond traditional classroom activities. Some students indicated

that the AI system allowed them to practice conversations repeatedly, which helped them become more comfortable using English in hospitality contexts. Example student response:

“ChatGPT allowed me to practice conversations with hotel guests many times, which helped me improve my communication skills.”

2. Reduced Anxiety in Speaking English

Another theme identified in the qualitative data was reduced communication anxiety. Several students mentioned that they felt less nervous when practicing English with ChatGPT compared to speaking with classmates or instructors. Example student response: *“I felt more confident speaking English with ChatGPT because I was not afraid of making mistakes.”* This finding suggests that AI-assisted communication practice may create a supportive learning environment where students feel more comfortable experimenting with language use.

3. Realistic Hospitality Communication Scenarios

Students also highlighted that the role-play scenarios used in the study were relevant to real-world hospitality situations. They reported that the activities helped them understand how to communicate with hotel guests and respond to service-related requests. Example student response: *“The activities helped me learn how to respond to guest questions and complaints in English.”* These qualitative findings support the quantitative results by indicating that AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT provided students with meaningful opportunities to practice hospitality communication in realistic contexts.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT can support the development of students’ communication skills in an English for Hospitality Business course. The results revealed that students demonstrated a high level of communication performance across several aspects, including fluency, pronunciation and clarity, appropriateness of language use, and interactional skills. These findings suggest that AI-assisted role-play activities can provide students with meaningful opportunities to practice English communication in simulated real-world situations relevant to the hospitality industry.

One notable finding of the study is that students achieved the highest mean score in interactional skills. This result may be attributed to the conversational nature of ChatGPT, which allows learners to engage in interactive dialogues and respond to various communication scenarios. In hospitality contexts, interactional competence is particularly important because service staff must communicate effectively with guests and respond appropriately to their requests. The results of this study support previous research indicating that conversational AI technologies can facilitate interactive learning environments and promote active participation in communication practice (Kasneci et al., 2023).

The findings also revealed that students demonstrated a high level of appropriateness in language use during the role-play activities. Through repeated interaction with AI-generated responses, students were able to observe and practice appropriate language expressions commonly used in hospitality communication. These results are consistent with previous studies suggesting that AI tools can provide meaningful language input and support students' learning processes (Li et al., 2024).

In addition to improving communication performance, the results indicated that students had highly positive perceptions toward the use of ChatGPT in role-play activities. Many students reported that ChatGPT helped them practice English communication more effectively and increased their confidence in speaking English. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that AI-assisted communication practice can reduce language anxiety and encourage learners to participate more actively in speaking activities (Wang & Liu, 2024).

The qualitative findings further revealed that students perceived AI-assisted role-play activities as useful and engaging for practicing hospitality communication scenarios. Students reported that interacting with ChatGPT allowed them to practice conversations repeatedly and helped them better understand real-world service situations. These findings are consistent with the study conducted by Khlakheang and Chergroongroj (2025), which found that the integration of AI tools in language learning can encourage students to adopt more active learning strategies and support autonomous learning behaviors.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that integrating AI technologies into role-play activities can enhance the effectiveness of communication practice in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses. In particular, AI-assisted role-play can provide students with opportunities to simulate realistic communication situations that reflect professional contexts in the hospitality industry. Therefore, language instructors may consider incorporating AI tools such as ChatGPT into classroom activities to create more interactive and engaging learning environments. Future research may further explore the use of AI-assisted learning in other language learning contexts and examine its long-term impact on students' communication skill development.

Recommendation for Further Studies

Although the findings of this study provide useful insights into the use of AI-assisted role-play using ChatGPT in an English for Hospitality Business course, several recommendations for future research can be suggested. First, this study employed a case study design focusing on a specific group of students in one course. Future studies could expand the research by involving a larger sample size or conducting studies across multiple institutions to increase the generalizability of the findings. Comparative studies between different groups of students, such as students from different academic programs or proficiency levels, may also provide a broader understanding of the effectiveness of AI-assisted learning activities. Second, the present study primarily examined

students' communication skills and perceptions through classroom activities and questionnaire data. Future research may consider employing experimental or quasi-experimental research designs to examine the impact of AI-assisted role-play more rigorously. For example, researchers could compare students who use AI-assisted role-play with those who participate in traditional role-play activities in order to determine the relative effectiveness of these instructional approaches. Third, future studies may explore the use of AI-assisted role-play in other areas of English language learning. While the present study focused on communication skills in hospitality contexts, AI technologies such as ChatGPT may also be applied to support other language skills, including speaking fluency, listening comprehension, vocabulary development, and pragmatic competence. Finally, future research could investigate students' long-term learning outcomes when using AI-assisted learning tools. Longitudinal studies may provide deeper insights into how sustained exposure to AI-assisted communication practice influences students' language proficiency and confidence in real-world communication settings.

Overall, further research in this area will contribute to a better understanding of how artificial intelligence can be effectively integrated into language education and how AI-assisted learning environments can support students' communication skill development in English for Specific Purposes courses.

Limitations of the study

Despite the positive outcomes, this study has several limitations. First, as a single-context case study involving 56 students at one institution, the findings may not be fully generalizable to other academic settings or proficiency levels. Second, technical limitations must be acknowledged; the effectiveness of AI-assisted learning is highly dependent on stable internet connectivity. Furthermore, the occurrence of AI hallucinations where ChatGPT might generate factually incorrect hospitality information or inconsistent conversational cues—could potentially impact the realism of the simulation. Researchers and educators should remain mindful of these algorithmic constraints when designing AI-based tasks.

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