

Integrating CHATGPT Into EFL Instruction: A Position Paper on Communicative Competence Development

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Abstract: This position paper argues that the deliberate, pedagogically grounded integration of ChatGPT into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction represents a meaningful advance toward more communicative, learner-centered language education. Drawing on established frameworks in communicative language teaching (CLT), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and recent scholarship on generative artificial intelligence in education, the paper advances three core claims: that ChatGPT's conversational architecture aligns structurally with the demands of communicative competence development; that an integrative, multi-skill approach to AI-assisted instruction is pedagogically superior to isolated skill-based applications; and that effective integration requires explicit teacher scaffolding, ethical guidance, and institutional support. The paper proposes a concrete framework for ChatGPT integration across the four language skills and offers actionable recommendations for EFL practitioners, curriculum designers, and institutional leaders, with particular reference to the Uzbekistan EFL context.

Keywords: ChatGPT, communicative competence, EFL, integrative teaching, communicative language teaching (CLT), Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), AI-assisted language learning, digital literacy, language skills, Uzbekistan EFL context.

Introduction: Proficiency in English has become a defining feature of academic and professional mobility in the twenty-first century. For learners in Uzbekistan and across Central Asia, where English is taught as a foreign language within institutional settings, the gap between formal grammatical knowledge and practical communicative ability represents one of the most persistent challenges in language education. Students may demonstrate reasonable accuracy on discrete-point grammar tests yet struggle to sustain meaningful conversation, produce coherent written arguments, or respond flexibly in authentic communicative situations.

This gap reflects a structural tension within traditional language teaching methodology: the tendency to treat language as an object of analysis rather than a medium of interaction. As Hymes (1972) argued in his foundational account of communicative competence, knowing a language means more than knowing its grammatical rules — it means knowing when, how, and with whom to use it appropriately. Any pedagogical approach that privileges formal accuracy over interactional fluency will inevitably underserve its learners.

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence, and

ChatGPT in particular, presents language educators with a genuinely novel opportunity to address this structural tension. Of the many AI-powered tools now available to EFL educators, ChatGPT stands out for its conversational design, ease of access, and direct applicability to the core demands of communicative language teaching. Unlike grammar-checking software or vocabulary applications, ChatGPT enables open-ended, contextually sensitive dialogue — the kind of interaction that most closely mirrors authentic communicative use. It responds, adapts, corrects, and elaborates in ways that no static exercise or textbook passage can replicate.

This paper takes a clear position: ChatGPT, when integrated deliberately and pedagogically into EFL instruction, constitutes a meaningful advance in the pursuit of communicative competence. This is not a claim that AI should replace teachers, nor that technology alone resolves deep-seated educational challenges. Rather, it is an argument that the specific affordances of conversational AI align unusually well with what communicative language teaching has long demanded — and that EFL educators have both the opportunity and the professional responsibility to engage with these tools critically and purposefully.

METHOD

1. Theoretical Foundations: Communicative Competence and CLT

The concept of communicative competence has been central to language education since Hymes (1972) challenged the adequacy of purely formal accounts of linguistic knowledge. For Hymes, competence was necessarily social: it encompassed not only grammatical knowledge but also sociolinguistic awareness of how language functions in context. Canale and Swain (1980) subsequently formalized this insight into a four-component model encompassing grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies — a framework that became the theoretical foundation for communicative language teaching (CLT).

CLT shifted the pedagogical emphasis from formal accuracy toward meaningful interaction, from sentence-level manipulation toward discourse-level communication. Its core methods — information gap activities, role play, task-based instruction — were

designed to create conditions in which language use, not language display, was the primary activity. Richards and Rodgers (2014) observe that CLT's enduring influence lies in its insistence that language is learned through use, not merely through study. This principle remains as relevant today as it was when CLT first emerged, and it is the theoretical lens through which the pedagogical value of ChatGPT must be evaluated.

Within the Uzbek scholarly context, researchers such as Sadullayeva (2023) have interpreted communicative competence as the learner's capacity not merely to know the language system but to deploy it flexibly in authentic situations. Ur-Rehman, Ali, and Hussain (2023) provide evidence that task-based and discussion-oriented instruction increases spoken output among EFL learners, reinforcing the argument that communicative competence requires deliberate practice in context-rich environments. Rahimi and Zhang (2015) similarly emphasize the critical role of interactive methods in developing professional language readiness among university students.

2. CALL and the Integrative Phase

The relationship between technology and language learning has been theorized under the umbrella of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) for several decades. Warschauer and Healey (1998) identified three historical phases of CALL: the behavioristic phase, characterized by drill-and-practice software; the communicative phase, in which technology supported more open-ended practice; and the integrative phase, in which digital tools are embedded within authentic, task-based communicative environments. It is within this third, most pedagogically sophisticated phase that AI-assisted language learning belongs.

Recent scholarship confirms that generative AI tools represent a qualitative advance within the integrative phase. Baskara and Mukarto (2023) document how ChatGPT-mediated writing feedback promotes deeper engagement with revision — a metacognitive process central to writing development. Kasneci et al. (2023) offer a comprehensive analysis of the opportunities and risks of large language models in education, identifying personalization, accessibility, and immediate feedback as primary affordances. What distinguishes ChatGPT from earlier CALL tools is not

merely its sophistication but its conversational architecture: it is designed to sustain open-ended, contextually adaptive dialogue in ways that earlier software could not.

3. The Affective Dimension: Anxiety, Motivation, and AI

Any account of communicative competence development must engage with its affective dimensions. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) identified foreign language classroom anxiety as a significant affective variable — a form of situation-specific apprehension that inhibits oral participation, reduces risk-taking, and undermines the spontaneity that communicative competence requires. Anxious learners speak less, attempt less, and develop more slowly.

The non-judgmental, private nature of AI interaction offers a meaningful response to this problem. When learners practice with ChatGPT rather than in front of peers and a teacher, the social stakes of error are eliminated. This is not a trivial benefit. For learners in high-context, face-conscious educational cultures — including many Central Asian institutional settings — the fear of public error is a genuine and persistent barrier to communicative development. AI interaction provides a low-stakes rehearsal space in which learners can experiment, fail privately, and build the confidence that higher-stakes classroom interaction demands. Peng (2022) demonstrates that AI-assisted language practice measurably increases learner motivation and willingness to engage with additional materials, consistent with self-determination theory's account of how autonomy supports intrinsic motivation.

4. The Case for ChatGPT: Three Core Claims

The position advanced in this paper rests on three interconnected claims. The first is that ChatGPT's conversational architecture is structurally aligned with the demands of communicative competence development. ChatGPT is, at its foundation, a conversational system. It is designed to maintain coherent, contextually appropriate dialogue across a wide range of topics, registers, and interactional purposes. These are precisely the capacities that communicative competence theory identifies as essential: discourse coherence, sociolinguistic appropriacy, and strategic negotiation of meaning. To

engage with ChatGPT in English requires a learner to read the response, interpret its meaning, formulate a reply, attend to vocabulary and grammar simultaneously, and sustain the interaction across turns — a microcosm of what authentic communication demands.

The second claim is that integrative, multi-skill applications of ChatGPT are pedagogically superior to isolated skill-based use. It is possible to deploy ChatGPT as a single-skill tool — a grammar checker, a writing assistant, a vocabulary resource — and such applications have genuine value. But they reproduce the fragmentation of language learning that CLT sought to overcome. The more powerful approach treats ChatGPT as a medium for integrative practice, in which reading, writing, speaking (via text), vocabulary, and grammar are engaged simultaneously within a coherent communicative task. Godwin-Jones (2022) observes that multi-modal AI integration in language instruction produces more holistic developmental outcomes than single-skill applications.

The third claim is that the benefits of ChatGPT integration are conditional on skilled teacher scaffolding and explicit ethical guidance. AI tools do not teach; they provide a medium within which learning can occur, depending on how that medium is structured. The most significant risk of unscaffolded AI use is cognitive bypassing: students who use ChatGPT to generate answers rather than to practice language production receive no communicative development benefit from the interaction. Kasneci et al. (2023) identify this risk explicitly, and it underscores the irreplaceable role of the teacher as task designer, monitor, and reflective guide. The integration of ChatGPT does not diminish the teacher's professional role; it redefines it toward higher-order functions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preceding theoretical analysis yields several findings with direct pedagogical significance. First, the review of CLT theory and CALL scholarship confirms that ChatGPT's affordances — interactivity, adaptability, immediate feedback, and availability — address well-documented structural deficiencies in traditional EFL instruction. The gap between grammatical knowledge and communicative ability is not primarily a knowledge problem; it is a practice

problem. ChatGPT expands the opportunities for communicative practice beyond the classroom hour in ways that no prior technology has done as accessibly or as authentically.

Second, the analysis of the affective dimension reveals that the psychological benefits of AI interaction are not incidental but pedagogically significant. Communicative anxiety is a documented barrier to EFL development, and the low-stakes environment of AI interaction directly addresses it. This finding aligns with Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, which proposes that learners acquire language most effectively when affective barriers — including anxiety — are minimized. ChatGPT, in this light, is not merely a practice tool but an anxiety-reduction mechanism that creates the psychological conditions for more effective communicative learning.

Third, the framework proposed in this paper (Table 1) demonstrates that ChatGPT can be systematically integrated across all four language skills without requiring significant institutional infrastructure beyond reliable internet access. The framework is designed to be implementable within existing EFL curricula, requiring teacher professional development in task design rather than wholesale curricular overhaul. This practical accessibility distinguishes ChatGPT from many earlier educational technology interventions that failed in part due to implementation complexity.

A critical discussion of limitations is also warranted. The

present analysis is theoretical rather than empirical: the claims advanced are grounded in existing scholarship and logical argument rather than in primary data collected from ChatGPT-integrated classrooms. The absence of locally collected empirical data is a genuine limitation. Future empirical research in the Uzbekistan EFL context — with precise sample sizes, validated instruments, and sufficient intervention duration — is needed to test the claims advanced here. Additionally, the persistent challenges of internet access reliability and digital literacy variation among both students and teachers in regional Uzbekistan settings must be acknowledged as constraints on equitable implementation. The framework proposed here is a principled starting point, not a claim that obstacles are absent.

The discussion also highlights a finding concerning teacher role transformation. The integration of AI into EFL instruction does not reduce the demand on teacher expertise; it redirects it. Teachers who integrate ChatGPT effectively must be skilled in task design, capable of identifying when students are bypassing rather than engaging, and competent to guide reflective discussion about AI use itself. This represents an expansion of professional competence requirements rather than a simplification of the teaching role — a finding with significant implications for pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.

Table 1. Proposed Framework for ChatGPT Integration in EFL Instruction

Skill	ChatGPT Activity	Pedagogical Goal	Teacher Role
Speaking	Open dialogue simulations; topic-based role-play	Fluency, spontaneity, confidence	Set prompts; monitor output quality
Writing	Draft → AI feedback → revision cycles	Accuracy, cohesion, lexical range	Design tasks; review revisions
Reading	AI-generated	Comprehension,	Select texts; guide

Skill	ChatGPT Activity	Pedagogical Goal	Teacher Role
	questions and text summaries	critical thinking	post-reading discussion
Vocabulary & Grammar	Conversational drills; error identification tasks	Accuracy and metalinguistic awareness	Identify gaps; design consolidation tasks

CONCLUSION

This position paper has argued that the integration of ChatGPT into EFL instruction represents a pedagogically principled and practically significant advance in the pursuit of communicative competence. Three core claims have been advanced and theoretically substantiated: that ChatGPT's conversational architecture is structurally aligned with the demands of communicative language teaching; that integrative, multi-skill applications of the tool are pedagogically superior to isolated use; and that effective integration is conditional on skilled teacher scaffolding and explicit ethical guidance.

These claims are grounded in established theoretical frameworks — CLT, CALL, and the sociolinguistic tradition from Hymes onward — and are consistent with a growing body of international scholarship on generative AI in language education. They are also responsive to the specific pedagogical realities of EFL instruction in Uzbekistan, where the gap between formal linguistic knowledge and practical communicative ability remains a defining challenge and where AI tools offer a genuinely novel means of addressing it.

The following recommendations are offered to three audiences. For EFL practitioners: design ChatGPT tasks around learner production rather than AI output; use the tool for integrative multi-skill tasks; provide explicit ethical guidance from the outset; and use AI interaction as a low-stakes rehearsal space for anxious learners. For curriculum designers: build ChatGPT integration into formal curriculum frameworks rather than leaving it to individual discretion; develop assessment instruments that measure communicative competence

holistically; and sequence AI-integrated tasks developmentally. For institutional leaders: invest in teacher professional development addressing both technical and pedagogical dimensions of AI integration; develop clear institutional policies on ethical AI use; and address infrastructure constraints that limit equitable implementation.

The integration of artificial intelligence into language education is neither a panacea nor a threat. It is a pedagogical opportunity — one that requires the same qualities that good teaching has always required: clear goals, principled design, responsive judgment, and a genuine commitment to learner development. ChatGPT does not change what communicative competence is. It changes, meaningfully and significantly, what is possible in the pursuit of it. Future empirical research in the Uzbekistan EFL context will be essential to validate the framework proposed here and to refine its implementation in response to real classroom conditions.

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