

Artificial Intelligence as A Means of Developing Oral Communicative Competence in FLE Classes

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Abstract: The article examines artificial intelligence as a pedagogical means of developing oral communicative competence in French as a foreign language (FLE) classes at university level. The study is based on recent research on AI-supported language learning, conversational generative AI, critical thinking in higher education, and public TED discussions by leading AI developers. The paper argues that AI can enrich FLE speaking practice through dialogic simulation, pronunciation feedback, role-play, intercultural scenarios and learner autonomy. At the same time, the use of AI must be methodologically controlled: students should not simply receive ready-made answers, but learn to question, compare, verify and reformulate AI output. Particular attention is paid to adaptation in the Uzbek higher education context, where collective learning traditions, respect for the teacher, multilingual competence and national digitalization priorities create both opportunities and risks. The article proposes a culturally responsive model of AI-assisted oral work that combines modern technologies with independent thinking, information-search skills and ethical academic behavior.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, FLE, oral communicative competence, French language teaching, critical thinking, Uzbekistan, higher education, digital pedagogy.

Introduction: The rapid development of artificial intelligence has changed the logic of foreign language education. In FLE classes, oral communicative competence is no longer limited to repetition, memorization and occasional classroom dialogue. Students can now interact with conversational agents, receive instant feedback, prepare role-plays, compare registers and practise pronunciation outside the classroom. Recent research on AI-supported French education notes that spoken-conversation functions may support oral reception, production, interaction and mediation within a CEFR-oriented framework [1]. This is especially significant for university students whose contact hours are limited and whose speaking anxiety often prevents active participation.

However, AI must not be treated as a magical tutor. It is a tool, and a tool has the moral personality of a spoon: useful, but not responsible for the soup. Conversational AI can increase practice time and confidence, yet it can

also encourage intellectual passivity if students use it only to generate ready answers. Therefore, the central problem of this article is methodological: how can AI be used to develop oral communicative competence in FLE classes without weakening students' independent thinking, search behavior and academic responsibility?

The relevance of the topic is strengthened by national priorities in Uzbekistan. The Strategy for the Development of Artificial Intelligence Technologies until 2030 defines the creation of legal, technological and economic conditions for AI implementation, the development of human resource potential and the improvement of AI skills among the population [6]. In foreign language education, Uzbekistan State World Languages University organized the course "Artificial Intelligence in Foreign Language Teaching: Theory and Practice" in 2025 in connection with Resolution No. 415 on retraining and professional development of higher education staff [7; 8]. Thus, the integration of AI into FLE

is not merely a fashionable trend, but part of a wider transformation of higher education.

METHODS

The article uses qualitative methodological synthesis. First, it analyses recent scholarly publications on AI in language learning, including studies of FLE oral skills, conversational GenAI chatbots, AI-supported language teaching and the relationship between AI and critical thinking in higher education. Second, it examines selected TED talks and public conversations by well-known AI developers and researchers: Sam Altman, Greg Brockman and Demis Hassabis. These sources are not used as empirical linguistic data, but as indicators of how AI leaders frame the future of human-machine collaboration, safety, creativity and agency [5; 9; 10]. Third, the article applies comparative pedagogical analysis to the Uzbek university context, taking into account multilingualism, teacher-centered traditions, collective learning habits and the growing national focus on digital competencies.

The research logic is interdisciplinary. The FLE perspective provides the language-teaching objective; AI studies provide the technological and ethical framework; critical pedagogy provides the safeguard against dependency. The article does not claim that AI replaces the teacher. On the contrary, it assumes that AI is most effective when the teacher designs tasks, controls difficulty, verifies content, guides reflection and transforms AI output into communicative action.

Comparative Perspective on International Experience and Uzbek Cultural Adaptation

International literature increasingly treats generative AI as a component of language-teacher professional knowledge. Moorhouse and Wong argue that language teachers need to use GenAI responsibly, ethically and effectively, which means that AI integration is not simply technical but pedagogical [3]. In the Uzbek context, this principle requires cultural adaptation. University students often learn in groups, value teacher authority and may feel uncomfortable challenging a text presented by a “smart” system. Therefore, AI tasks must explicitly normalize doubt. Students should be told that questioning AI is not disrespectful; it is an academic skill.

Uzbekistan’s educational context is multilingual: Uzbek, Russian, English and French often coexist in students’ linguistic repertoires. This can be used productively. AI-

assisted FLE tasks may ask students to compare French expressions with Uzbek pragmatic equivalents, identify where literal translation fails, and explain cultural differences in politeness, indirectness, humor or professional communication. For example, students may compare French formulas such as “Je me permets de vous demander...” with Uzbek and Russian academic politeness strategies. Such work develops oral competence and intercultural awareness at the same time.

Cultural adaptation also requires attention to topics. AI role-plays should not be limited to Parisian cafés and tourist clichés, though admittedly the baguette has an impressive diplomatic career. Uzbek students may practise French through local realities: university life in Jizzakh or Tashkent, tourism in Samarkand and Bukhara, family celebrations, public transport, hospitality, professional interviews, academic mobility and ecological issues such as water management. This makes French speech meaningful rather than decorative.

A balanced model for Uzbek FLE classes may include three stages. The first stage is AI-assisted preparation: students use AI to collect vocabulary and sample phrases, but must verify at least two expressions through dictionaries, course materials or teacher guidance. The second stage is human interaction: students perform dialogues in pairs or small groups, using AI output only as a scaffold. The third stage is critical reflection: students compare their own oral production with AI suggestions, correct errors and explain why they accept or reject certain forms. This model preserves the teacher’s role, respects collective learning and builds student autonomy.

The main risks of AI in FLE are dependency, superficial fluency, misinformation, cultural stereotyping, privacy concerns and academic dishonesty. The critical thinking problem is especially serious. A recent systematic review of AI and critical thinking in higher education identifies uncritical dependence on AI, digital literacy gaps, lack of transparency and institutional limitations as major challenges [4].

To reduce these risks, teachers should design tasks in which AI cannot simply “finish the homework.” A productive rule is: AI may help generate material, but the student must transform, verify and orally defend it.

For example, instead of asking students to produce a monologue on “La technologie dans la vie quotidienne,” the teacher can require four steps: 1) ask AI for ten ideas; 2) reject three weak or culturally unsuitable ideas; 3) verify two facts through independent sources; 4) present a two-minute oral answer and explain which AI suggestions were changed. This turns AI from a shortcut into a training partner.

Another risk is loss of authentic speech. Students may begin to imitate polished AI French that does not match their level. This creates artificial fluency and may even increase anxiety when they cannot reproduce such language in real conversation. Therefore, teachers should ask AI to adapt output to CEFR levels: A1, A2 or B1. They should also require students to personalize sentences. A sentence is not truly learned until the student can change it, disagree with it and survive a follow-up question. Privacy must also be addressed. Students should not upload personal documents, private images, sensitive family information or institutional data into AI systems. Oral tasks can be designed with fictional identities and neutral scenarios. In Uzbekistan, where national AI policy is developing legal and ethical frameworks, classroom practice should already model responsible data behavior [6].

Finally, assessment must change. If students are assessed only on prepared written scripts, AI will dominate. Oral assessment should include spontaneous follow-up questions, peer interaction, source explanation and reflection on AI use.

CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence can become an effective means of developing oral communicative competence in FLE classes, but only under pedagogical control. Its strongest advantages are increased speaking practice, individualized feedback, role-play simulation, anxiety reduction and support for autonomous learning. Its main danger is not that students will use AI; they already will. The danger is that they may use it without method, without verification and without intellectual responsibility.

For Uzbek university FLE classes, the optimal approach is not prohibition, but guided integration. AI should be adapted to local culture, multilingual realities, professional needs and national digitalization priorities. Students should practise French through culturally

meaningful Uzbek contexts while learning to compare, verify and reformulate AI output. In this model, AI does not weaken the teacher’s authority; it makes the teacher’s methodological role even more important. The future FLE classroom should therefore combine three elements: technological competence, communicative practice and critical independence. Only this combination allows students to use modern tools without outsourcing their own thinking.

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