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ROLEPLAY CHATBOTS AS A POWERFUL LANGUAGE LEARNING TOOL

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Abstract. This work examines the efficiency of using of roleplay chatbots, specifically Character AI, as a tool for foreign language learning. It argues that AI-driven chatbots offer significant advantages by creating an interactive and personalized learning environment. The analysis highlights key benefits, including the development of writing skills through regular interaction, the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary within natural conversations in various contexts, and the creation of a stress-free language environment that encourages experimentation without fear of error. A central focus is the unique role-playing component of Character AI, which proves to enhance students' motivation and emotional engagement through gamification and personalization. The work also addresses some limitations and risks, such as the AI's limited memory, understanding of cultural context, and the potential risk of psychological dependence. Analysis proves that while roleplay chatbots are a valuable additional tool that can significantly diversify and enrich the educational process, they are most effective when integrated with traditional teaching methods rather than being considered as a complete replacement of human teaching.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, chatbots, Character AI, language learning, role-playing, educational technology.

Introduction.

Modern technologies are rapidly changing the educational process, opening up new opportunities for teachers and students. One such tool is artificial intelligence, specifically AI-powered chatbots. As Nezhyva O. notes, a chatbot is a specially adapted network capable of mimicking conversations with real people, answering questions, searching, analyzing, and modifying information according to user requests, or communicating in a predetermined manner. (Nezhyva, 2024: 101).

Main text.

The effectiveness of their use is confirmed by many researchers. (Chetveryk V., Liulka V., Cathrine V. Felix, David Baidoo-Anu, Leticia Owusu Ansah, Irwanda Kusuma Ningsih, Thomas B. J.). For example, Thomas B. J. states, that offering chatbot-supported communication channel revealed that learners find it enjoyable and

comfortable to engage with, while also efficient in terms of information retrieval time. (Thomas, 2023).

Our attention was drawn by one platform for creating and using these chatbots — Character AI. This is a neural language model-based chatbot service developed by Noam Shazeer and Daniel de Freitas, the developers of Google's large-scale language model LaMDA (Language Model for Dialogue Apps). Its beta version became available in September 2022, giving users access to cutting-edge technology for a variety of purposes, including education. (Irwanda, 2024, c. 193).

A unique feature of Character AI is the ability to create custom characters with individual characteristics: personality, voice, communication style, and even backstory. This personalization makes the learning process more engaging: students can chat with virtual celebrities or role-play any real or fictional character, significantly diversifying the possible conversational scenarios and thus, in turn, diversifying the possible vocabulary and grammatical structures used in such conversations. This forms the basis of the role-playing component that distinguishes Character AI from other chatbots and is the reason we chose it as a research subject.

This chatbot has proven its usefulness as a tool for learning foreign languages in multiple ways. We would like to highlight the main aspects of language learning that benefit from the usage of the chatbot.

Developing writing skills. One of the key areas of chatbot use is writing practice. Liulka V. identifies the following steps: regular interaction with the bot; using the bot to expand vocabulary by requesting synonyms, expressions, and phrases; experimenting with writing on different topics and in various genres. (Liulka, 2024: 199).

Chatbots thus create conditions for the natural development of writing competence, allowing students to work with vocabulary and grammar in a variety of contexts.

Grammar and vocabulary in a real context. A significant benefit of chatbots is that they demonstrate the use of grammatical structures in real-life speech. The role-playing component allows for language acquisition as it is used in practice. A study by

Irwanda K. N. showed that students interacting with Character AI better learned grammar rules. This is because, through role-playing interactions, students experience grammar rules firsthand in conversation, better understand the practical meaning of certain grammatical structures, and can apply them in their own speech. This makes grammar learning more effective. (Irwanda, 2024: 202).

Furthermore, the chatbot can rephrase responses, correct errors, and suggest more natural wording, which helps develop verbal skills. One student noted, "When I struggled to explain something, the AI would rephrase my sentences more clearly, showing me how to express my thoughts better." (Irwanda, 2024: 201).

Creating a language environment. Chatbots help simulate a real language environment. Role-playing in chatbots effectively creates an artificial language environment where students are immersed in a variety of communication scenarios. As the study emphasizes, communicating with a chatbot promotes language practice through realistic interactions. (Irwanda, 2024: 198)

Emotional engagement and barrier removal. The role-playing component increases students' motivation through gamification, personalization, and emotional engagement. The ability to choose or create a character, customize their tone and style, makes the interaction more engaging and meaningful.

Programs can interact with students, offering them the opportunity to develop speaking, writing, and listening skills at their own pace. In Irwanda's study, students were encouraged to experiment with language use in a comfortable, stress- and pressure-free environment where they could practice constructing sentences and using new vocabulary without fear of making mistakes. (Irwanda, 2024: 197). This allows students to practice the language at a comfortable pace, without fear or pressure.

However, the potential downsides of using chatbots should not be overlooked. Despite the obvious advantages, using chatbots in language teaching has a number of significant limitations. The main risks stem from AI's inability to fully convey human aspects of communication: the lack of non-verbal cues (gestures, intonation), formulaic responses, and limited understanding of cultural context can give students a distorted perception of real-life communication. Chatbots also have limited memory and are

significantly less creative than humans. Furthermore, there is a risk of psychological dependence on the "ideal interlocutor", which hinders the transition to live dialogue with people. It is important to emphasize that chatbots do not recognize the student's emotional state and cannot provide deep creative feedback, making them an auxiliary tool, rather than a substitute in the educational process.

Summary and conclusions.

AI-powered chatbots, specifically roleplay ones, are becoming an essential tool for foreign language learning. They promote the development of written and oral skills, facilitate the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary in a real-world context, and create a stress-free language environment. Through personalization, interactivity, and game elements, these tools increase student motivation and engagement.

However, chatbots remain a supplementary tool and cannot completely replace live communication with a teacher or classmates. They also have a number of limitations and risks, such as limited cultural context, memory, and the risk of addiction, which should also be considered when using them.

Optimal use case is combining it with traditional teaching methods, allowing technology to fully exploit its potential and making the language learning process more effective.

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