

Developing Interactional Competence in the Era of ChatGPT

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Article information	
Abstract	The advent of ChatGPT has redrawn the boundary of pedagogical discourse, where the dyadic configuration of teacher-student has, for many, become triadic -- one that includes AI as a relevant third party. Within applied linguistics, AI-focused research has predominantly targeted the teaching and learning of writing (Fang & Han, 2025). The work on AI and speaking, on the other hand, has largely involved perception studies documenting its positive impact on learners' willingness to communicate (Goh & Aryadoust, 2025). In this paper, I explore the role of AI in the teaching and learning of speaking, and in particular, the development of interactional competence. Based on a corpus of 30 learner-AI interactions and 30 learner-proficient speakers of English interactions beginning with a single prompt, I demonstrate the ways in which ChatGPT excels and fails at acting as a useful conversation partner in developing the learners' interactional competence. I end with a discussion on the usefulness of CA in grounding our pedagogical appraisals of new technologies as well as ways in which language teachers can leverage ChatGPT to advance their goal of developing learners' interactional competence.
Keywords	Interactional competence, conversation analysis, ChatGPT, speaking and communication skills, AI in language education
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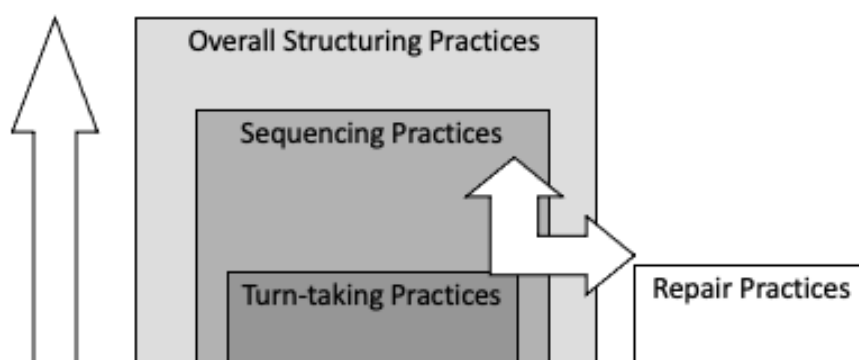
The advent of ChatGPT has redrawn the boundary of pedagogical discourse, where the dyadic configuration of teacher-student has, for many, become triadic -- one that includes AI as an relevant third party (in language education in particular), not to be missed or dismissed (e.g., Huang et al., 2022; Jeon et al., 2024; Ji et al., 2023; Kohnke et al., 2023; Kostka & Toncelli, 2023; Lee et al., 2026; Sert, 2025; Van Nguyen, 2025; Wang, Zou, Du & Wang., 2024; Wang, Tao & Chen, 2024). Within applied linguistics, AI-focused research has predominantly targeted the teaching and learning of writing (Fang & Han, 2025; Feng et al., 2025). The work on AI and speaking, on the other hand, has largely involved perception studies (e.g., Jeon, 2024; Karatas et al., 2024) documenting AI's positive impact on learners' willingness to communicate (Goh & Aryadoust, 2025; Yuan & Liu, 2025). Investigations into the actual performance of speaking in learner-AI interaction are rather limited (e.g., Dikaprio & Diem, 2024; Dizon et al., 2022; Meng et al., 2026; Tai, 2024, 2025; Tai & Chen, 2023), and the use

of conversation analysis in such investigations remains rare (e.g., Choi & Oh, 2026; Eguchi et al., 2025; Voss & Waring, 2025). In this paper, I explore the role of AI in the teaching and learning of speaking, and in particular, the development of interactional competence.

One way of conceptualizing interactional competence is by specifying the practices that constitute such competence -- based on over 6 decades of conversation analytic findings (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Model of Interactional Practices (Wong & Waring, 2021)



For the purpose of this paper, I focus, in particular, on the practices of turn-taking, sequencing, and repair, and I ask: What is the role of ChatGPT in helping language learners build these practices? Or: In what ways does ChatGPT excel and/or fail at acting as a useful conversation partner?

As I work through these questions, I will be drawing upon two data corpora that my colleague Erik Voss and I built for our larger project on assessing the naturalness of AI. These include 30 recordings of language learner-AI interactions (HAI) (collected April 2025-April 2026) and 30 recordings of language learner-proficient human speaker interactions (HHI) (collected April-June 2026), all of which begin with the following single prompt:

You're my classmate, and we just saw each other at school on Monday after the weekend. Start by greeting me, keep the conversation going, and wrap it up when it makes sense.

As will be shown, my interest is in considering not only the degree to which ChatGPT exhibits, thereby models, qualities of natural conversation (Voss & Waring, 2025) but also the extent to which it creates opportunities for learners to engage in the various practices of turn-taking, sequencing, and repair.

1. AI and Turn-Taking Practices

Turn-taking practices entail turn construction (e.g., the basic building blocks of turns or turn constructional units (TCUs)) and turn allocation (e.g., self or other selection) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). To fully appreciate AI's management of turn-taking, it would be instructive to begin with some features of human turn-taking, as shown in the following extract

from HHI that involves a human proficient speaker of English (H2) interacting with a language learner (L11).

(1) HHI turn-taking

01 H2: ↑Hi:.. =[it's] so good to see you[:.
 02 L11: [HI:..] [y↑ea:h.
 03 great to see you.
 04 H2: .hh how was your weekend.
 05 L11: u::h .hh was very ni:ce,=um becau:se i- last weekend
 06 I: went to the Seattle?
 07 H2: °o↑h° [wo: ↑:w.]
 08 L11: [°yeah°]
 09 H2: very exciting.=
 10 L11: =yea:h. =and I came back .hh la- uh yesterday ni:ght,
 11 H2: oka:y. =so how long were you in Se↑attle.=

As can be seen, H2 builds her turn with not just clausal TCUs (e.g., *how was your weekend* in line 04) but also lexical (*hi* in line 01 *yeah* in line 10) and phrasal TCUs (e.g., *very exciting* in line 09). Some turns consist of a single unit (e.g., lines 04 & 09) and others multiple units (e.g., lines 05-06; 10-11). There is, in other words, a great deal of variety in turn construction. In addition, both the TCUs and turns tightly follow one another with latches between TCUs (e.g., line 01) and turns (e.g., lines 09-10) as well as overlaps (e.g., lines 02 & 08). This is not surprising given that in natural conversation, participants orient to the possible, not actual, completion of TCUs, silence (as is overlap) is typically minimized, and when it does happen, it often suggests trouble (Wong & Waring, 2021).

By contrast, both the TCU/turn variety and the natural sense of timing seem lacking in AI talk, as exemplified in the following HAI interaction between AI and the language learner P31.

(2) HAI turn-taking

01 AI: H↑E:Y. good to see y↑ou:. hope you had a nice weekend.
 02 how was it for you.
 03 (0.8)
 04 P31: >last weekend?<
 05 (0.8)
 06 AI: YEAh. yeah. >so I ended up< going on a little hike on Saturday?
 07 =just a short one? .hh but it was r↑eally NIce. how about ↑you.
 08 did you do anything fu:n, or just relax.
 09 P31: ↑eh just rela:x (.) with my husband at ho:me, .h
 10 and it >was really< ni:ce.
 11 (0.8)
 12 and- (.) do that again (.) n- next (.) weekend too.
 13 (1.8)
 14 AI: o:h that sounds really cozy. =I'm glad you got that downtime.
 15 Yeah. definitely. we should try to do something like
 16 that again next weekend. we can plan something fun.

As can be seen, AI talk here entails exclusively multi-unit turns and mostly clausal TCUs. In addition, silence seems pervasive. After P31's telling of her relaxing activity and positive assessment (lines 09-10), for example, there is no immediate uptake from AI. And P31's recompletion of her turn in line 12 is met with an even longer silence (line 13) – a feature that

in human interaction would suggest a dispreferred action (Pomerantz, 1984) to come, which is entirely incongruent with the positive assessment that follows (line 14). Both the lack of TCU/turn variety and the unnatural timing arguably amount to constraints in terms of AI's ability to act as an adequate conversation partner for the language learner.

At the same time, however, HAI also affords the opportunity for language learners to produce multi-unit turns (MUTs), where such opportunities are typically very limited in the traditional language classroom (Jacknick, 2011; Waring, 2009). The following extract begins with AI's comment on L6's experiences. AI's talk comes to a completion in line 03, and a (1.0) second of silence emerges. Note that L6 is not selected to speak but self-select with a multi-unit turn (lines 05-08).

(3) HAI mut and self-selection

01 AI: it's great that you also enjoy visiting places outside of New York.
 02 (0.2)
 03 There are so many amazing spots to see.
 04 (1.0)
 05 L6:→ when I visi::t Metropolitan Museum, .hh I:: (.) I:: (.) learn
 06 abou:t Egyptian culture, eh:: because was my first time when
 07 I (.) saw (.) uh real (.) things (.) fro:m Egyptian (.) Egyptian (.)
 08 culture. .hh that was- (.) very amazing for me, and >for my son.<

In the next extract, the language learner (L3) again produces a multi-unit turn (lines 03-05), except that here she also selects AI with *do you like popcorns* in line 05. Note that selecting the other is also a rare opportunity for language learners in the traditional classroom.

(4) HAI MUT and Other Selection

01 AI: no:pe. just the usual boredom. sounds like you had a better ti:me.
 02 anything else happened?
 03 L3:→ a:nd we:: (.) enjoyed (.) the ambiance.=
 04 um >I didn't like< the popcorns.<
 05 do you like p[↑]opcorns?

It would be worth mentioning that the same opportunities for language learners to produce multi-unit turns and exercise a wider range of turn allocation techniques are also evident in our HHI data, where the language learner is talking one-on-one with a proficient speaker, as shown in the next extract.

(5) HHI turn construction and allocation

01 H1: oh my g[↑]o:sh.=it's so great to s[↑]ee you.=how have you b[↑]ee:n.
 02 S2: I'm fine. =and your: how was your weekend.
 03 H1: oh my g[↓]osh.=it wa:s amazing. =the weather was perfect.
 04 .hh did you get out and do anything?
 05 S2: yea:h. I've been out with my kI:ds, we: (.) went out with our
 06 bi:kes, .hh uh through the: (.) Riverside Pa:rk, until the
 07 Chelsea Park, .h the Chel>sea Market< =[I'm sorry,]
 08 H1: [°oh wo:w.°]
 09 S2: .hh it was a long wa:y, but we had a lot of fun.
 10 H1: I l[↑]ove tha:t. >do you have< any plans for this week?
 11 S2: .h ↑i if it does not rai:n, I- I w- I want to do the sa:me,
 12 =but I think it will rain, =so I (.) I'm looking (.) to do something,

13 >what do you> suggest.

S2 produces multi-unit turns in lines 02, 05-07, and 11-13. He also self-selects in line 08 and selects H1 in lines 02 and 13. Given that the opportunities to speak with a proficient speaker one-on-one outside the classroom are extremely rare especially in the EFL as well as other resource-constrained contexts, however, HAI appears to be offering a decisive benefit in that regard.

In sum, in the realm of turn-taking (see Table 1), AI presents such affordances as space for language learners (LL) to produce multi-unit turns and conduct both self and other selections (without being relegated to the narrow role of the selected). At the same time, learners are also exposed to a limited range of TCUs and turn sizes (i.e., clausal and MUTs) as well as a skewed sense of turn timings that present an erroneous sense of what naturally occurring conversation looks and feels like.

Table 1
AI and Turn-taking for Language Learners

Affordances	Constraints
• LL opportunities to produce multi-unit turns • LL opportunities for both self and other selections	• LL exposure to limited range of TCUs and turn types • LL exposure to a skewed sense of turn timings

2. AI and Sequencing Practices

Sequencing concerns what one does with the turns in hand – what actions to build and stances to convey. One clear sequencing advantage HAI affords is the opportunities for the language learner to be the first mover, i.e., producing sequence-initiating actions, which is part and parcel of the turn-taking advantage of doing self and other selections. Without showing extended examples in their sequential contexts, let me simply note here that learner-produced TCUs such as the following are ubiquitous in our data:

*I'm thinking (.) how about we (.) having a coffee on Thursday?
do you have uh some suggestion for me to learn English?
do you have something (.) topic? to talk to me?
can you correct me?
I have a question. when I talk to you...*

In all these cases, the language learner produces a sequence initiating action that makes an AI response conditionally relevant. This is arguably an advantage of HAI for language learners given their usual status as the occupants of the R slot in the IRF (initiation-response-feedback) sequence (Mehan, 1979).

Beyond this clear advantage, however, we may note the repeated appearances of a limited set of actions in AI talk. The following is an example.

(6) HAI assessment account request

01 P1: u:h (.) there was nothing specia:l? but (0.5)
02 I will have a: uh job interview next week so: (0.5)
03 u:h I just prepared °for that.°

(7) HAI offer solicitude

Note that AI's quite disjunctive response to P9's prior talk contains an offer to help and the solicitude of *have a great time* (lines 03-05). Compared to the rather limited range of actions featured in AI talk, our HHI data contain a diversity of actions, as shown below.

01 S7: u:h so: (0.2) I: prax- (.) practiced (.) riding?
02 H2: °mm [hm, °]
03 S7: [u:h] at central park.
04 H2: O↑:h. riding (.) your bike?
05 S7: yes.
06 H2: ye:s. =.hh (0.2) u:m do you ride your bike every weekend?
07 (0.5)
08 S7: y↑e:s. uh so: (0.8) it becomes (.) wa:rm?
09 H2: [mm hm,]
10 S7: [so I start]ed practicing it. u:h Riding and uh (0.5)
11 I: am planning to: >participate< °in the:° (0.5)
12 bicycle event, next weekend.
13 H2: °pt° oh ↑ye:s. yes. what wa- what is it called?
14 the bicycle: (0.5) um (0.8) race? >is it a race?<=
15 S7: =uh it's not a competitive race, [uh]
16 H2: [°okay.<]

The same theme of limited range may also be observed in the stances conveyed in AI talk, and most notably, the affiliative affective stance and the K+ (Heritage, 2012) epistemic stance. Again, without going into details, the following AI-produced talk taken from our HAI corpus would sound familiar to anyone who's ever had any conversational encounter with an AI voice agent:

That's a great way to start the week.

Yes, that's right. Great job.
Your English is really good... it's great that you're practicing.
That's awesome. It's great when everything is delicious.

Of note is what may be characterized as a perpetual cheerleading stance, which becomes manifest in its extreme version in the extract below, where L4 appears to be experiencing difficulty completing his turn (line 02).

(9) HAI affiliative stance

01 AI: did you do anything fun?
 02 L4: .hh ↑o:h. it's very fu:n. I like (.) I like- (.) I like that's- (3.0)
 03 AI: → that sounds gr↑eat.

AI's positive assessment in line 03 is produced irrespective of S4's difficulty. To be clear, affiliation is normal part of HHI interaction as well, except that it is not as ubiquitous – or not produced regardless of the specific sequential contexts. In response to L3's report of her plan in the following extract, for example, H1 does offer a highly affiliative response in line 10 – with the *oh*-prefaced turn featuring 3 latched TCUs performing two object-side positive assessments bookending a subject-side one (Potter et al., 2020). The assessments are also delivered in part with a quieter voice, elongation, and laugh tokens, accentuating the genuine affect of affiliation.

(10) HHI and stance

01 H1: U:m (.) >do you have any< plans for this week?
 02 L3: °↑ay (.) y↑es.° this week, we're going to:: go to:: (0.5)
 03 see: the movie.
 04 H1: .hh oh.=what m↑ovie are you seeing.
 05 L3: u:m (0.2) >I wanna< see: (.) the Wicked.
 06 H1: O:h. it's- in the theater?
 07 L3: y↑eah.
 08 H1: ↑oh. w↑o:w. h- and you've never seen it before?
 09 L3: yes.
 10 H1: °oh that's amazing. =I lo:ve° that [movie. =it's] s(h)o: g(h)ood.=
 11 L3: [hnh hnh h]

Prior to line 10, however, H1 treats L3's account as news and proceeds to seek further information and clarification (lines 04, 06, 08). She does not, importantly, 'cheer-lead' at every single turn with *that's awesome/great/really good*.

AI also tends to maintain a K+ (always knowing) epistemic stance (Heritage, 2012) as well, as shown below, where L1 responds (lines 03-06) to AI's query (line 01) regarding MJ (Michael Jackson) the musical that L1 has seen.

(11) HAI epistemic stance

01 AI did you find any part of his story particularly surprising or inspiring?
 02 (1.0)
 03 L1: u:m actually I didn't know, I didn't know about (.) (hi:ms) (.) a lo:t?
 04 >especially< (.) when (.) was he like when (.) he was childhood?
 05 (.)
 06 >so it was:< (.) °surprising for me.°

07 (1.0)
 08 AI: → it's really touching how his childhood experiences shaped his
 09 artistry. It's amazing how he turned those experiences into such
 10 powerful (.) and iconic music. It's great that you got to learn more
 11 about him, and feel connected.

Note that AI's response beginning in line 08 demonstrates their knowledge about Michael Jackson rather than addressing L1's just reported take on the musical. A brief comparison may be entertained with the HHI interaction in Extract (10) above, where in lines 04, 06 and 08, H1 clearly maintains an unknowing or K- stance by seeking more information. In fact, throughout our data, the K+ epistemic stance is a distinct feature of AI talk, which becomes visible in their constant offer to help, the absence of any news receipts, as well as the excessive assertions of knowledge. In that regard, we may think of AI as the perpetual expert – in addition to being the perpetual cheerleader.

In brief, with regard to sequencing (see Table 2), AI clearly affords the opportunities for the language learner to be the first mover producing sequence-initiating actions. The limited range of action types as well as affective and epistemic stances, on the other hand, may be a double-edged sword. While exposure to this limited range paints an incomplete picture of natural conversation for the language learner, repeated exposure to this limited range also offers extended modeling of albeit a small set of actions and stances. Given that much of language learning requires repetition, one might argue that learning to do a limited range of things very well is better than not learning anything at all.

Table 2

AI and Sequencing for Language Learners

Affordances	Constraints
• LL opportunities to produce sequence-initiating actions • LL exposure to extensive modeling of a specific set of actions and stances	• LL exposure to a limited range of action types • LL exposure to a limited range of stances (affiliative and K+)

3. AI and Repair Practices

Of all the interactional practices, repair (Schegloff et al., 1977) is perhaps the most fraught aspect of AI interaction. But first, it is important to acknowledge that a definitive advantage of HAI is the wide range of opportunities for the learner to conduct other initiations of self-repair. There are many instances of the following produced by the language learners throughout our dataset:

Say again? Please?
Could you say again, please?
Sorry, would you say again, please?
Sorry, one more. More. Sorry.
What do you mean.
What is cuisine?
Sorry, could you speak more slowly?
Sorry, I can't understand.
Brain combo? What's that?

These repair initiations seem consistent with learner opportunities to conduct other selections and initiate sequences, and they may be regarded as a distinct advantage for the language learner in HAI, especially given the limited participation space for them in the traditional language classroom. Beyond this affordance are also some recurrent difficulties in AI's management of repair. In what follows, I demonstrate AI's current ability in initiating and providing repair with a particular focus on other-initiated self repair (OISR) and self-initiated other repair (SIOR).

3.1 AI not Initiating Repair

A brief example of other-initiated self repair may be observed in the following HHI interaction, where L10 is referring to the town Stamford outside New York City as a *really good* place to raise children.

(12) HHI OISR presence

```

01   H2:           [ ↑oh y↑es. Stamford.   ] [mm h:m]
02   L10:          [ Stamford is really good.] [to have]
03                   CHILdren □s goo:d□living there.
04   H2:   →       >what was that?<
05   L10:          if you have children? [is go-]
06   H2:                               [no:: I] don't have- oh >yeah.<
07                   if you do. YEa:h.

```

In line 04, with *what was that*, H2 initiates repair on L10's entire prior turn in part produced in simultaneous talk, and L10 offers the repair in line 05. In line 06, H2 first disconfirms having children upon hearing L10's first TCU. This is followed by the change-of-state *oh yeah*, upon further hearing L10's continuation *is go-* (presumably a cut-off version of *is good*) (Heritage, 1984). With this change-of-state, H2 accepts the repair offered by L10, further evidencing her initial trouble.

Consistent with the K+ epistemic stance, repair initiations such as *what was that* is generally absent in the AI talk in our HAI corpus. Still, it is always a challenge to demonstrate absence sequentially. The following HAI interaction might come close, where AI asks for the name of the opera P2 has seen (lines 01-02).

(13) HAI OISR absence

```

01   AI:           wo:w the opera. that must have been an amazing experience.
02                   what did you s↑ee.
03                   (1.0)
04   P2:           u:m I sa:w (.) um >Moby Dick.<
05                   (3.0)
06   AI:   →       La Bohéme is such a classic.
07                   it must have been incredible to see it live.

```

Following P2's response of *Mody Dick* is an extended silence of (3.0) seconds, which would suggest trouble at least in natural conversation. What AI produces next then appears to suggest nonunderstanding of *Mody Dick*, especially given the vast differences in phonetic qualities between the two opera names, which (along with the long gap of silence) rule out the possibility of mis-hearing. And yet, instead of treating *Mody Dick* as a trouble source with a repair

initiation, AI moves on, evidencing what might be characterized as progressivity over intersubjectivity¹. In other words, AI orients to moving on, rather than establishing mutual understanding, as a priority. One might also note that the absence of repair initiation on AI's part is consequential for the kinds of opportunities for the language learner to provide repair.

3.2 AI not Providing (Useful) Repair

In our data, AI also does not provide the repair in self-initiated other repair. I begin with an instance of HHI interaction, where such provision is observed. In recounting her weekend activity of outlet shopping in the States, L18 starts comparing her experience with that of shopping in Japanese outlets but shows trouble finding the exact wording to describe the goods in Japanese outlets (lines 01-03).

(14) HHI SIOR presence

```
01    L18:    it's like Japanese outlet it's- (.) °the-° (.)
02           all- (.) >uh most of the goods< it's like (0.2) left-
03           °how I should say° leftover? I don't- (.) [know exactly ]
04    H3:           [it's not ne:w.] =
05    L18:    =it's not [new. ]
06    H3:           [°yeah.°]
```

As shown, L18 initiates repair with an extended word search featuring multiple cutoffs, pauses, and the explicit solicitation for help *how should I say*. In line 04, H3 provides the repair *it's not new* in progressional overlap (Jefferson, 1983), which L18 then confirms in line 05. In the following HAI interaction, by contrast, the learner's struggle as observed in the self-repair initiations in line 03 meets AI's positive assessment (line 04) -- in keeping with their affiliative stance -- rather than any attempt to offer repair.

(15) HAI SIOR absence

```
01    AI:      I went hiking with some friends the weather was perfect.
02           did you do anything fun?
03    L4:      .hh ↑o:h. it's very fu:n. I like (.) I like- (.) I like that's- (3.0)
04    AI: → that sounds gr↑eat.
```

A similar instance may be observed below, where L6's struggle describing what she saw in the museum (line 01) is followed by a cut-off version *that's wonderful* (line 02) produced by AI-- again in lieu of any attempt to offer repair.

(16) HAI SIOR absence

```
01    L6:      .hh but in the Metropolitan Museu:m, I- ca- I
02           could (0.8) s:aw (.) u::h [rea:l ]
03    AI:→           [that's wond-]
04           (.)
05    P6:      real things. real (.) s- (.) uh sculpture?
```

¹ I thank Mark Romig for this very astute characterization during one of our doctoral seminar data sessions.

One might argue that without providing contingent assistance in these episodes with the other repair following the learner's self-initiation (SIOR), AI is not providing the help the language learner needs.

AI also doesn't seem to provide useful help when such help is explicitly sought by the language learner as in the case of other-initiation of self-repair. In the segment below, P5 initiates repair on *genres* (line 04) in AI's prior talk with a specific request for the latter to spell the word.

(17) HAI OISR absence

- 01 AI: absolutely. I enjoy reading and watching different kinds of shows.
 02 Recently, I read a fascinating mystery novel, and also watched
 03 a documentary about space exploration. both were really
 04 interesting. do you have any favorite genres?
 05 (0.8)
 06 P5: °e::h° sorry? wh- wh- what is chan- chanrus? can you spell it,
 07 (2.0)
 08 AI: → of course. a thriller is a genre of literature, film, or television. that
 09 is characterized by excitement, suspense, and tension. It's
 10 designed to keep the audience (.) on the edge of their seats.
 11 the word is spelled (.) T H R I L L E ↑R. do you enjoy watching thrillers?

In AI's multi-unit turn that ensues, the word *genre* – the trouble source for P5 -- is used without any explanation of what it is. What AI offers instead is an explanation of *thriller* and its spelling.

In sum, in the realm of repair (see Table 3), while AI offers the learner greater opportunities to initiate repair, their failure to initiate and provide repair not only narrows the range of repair practices the learner is exposed to but also deprives the latter of the help they need and seek.

Table 3
AI and Repair for Language Learners

Affordances	Constraints
• LL opportunities to initiate repair	• AI not initiating repair (i.e., no opportunities for LL to provide repair) • AI not providing (useful) repair (i.e., LLs not receiving the help they need and seek)

4. Discussion and Conclusion

In this paper, I have considered both the affordances and constraints of HAI in facilitating the development of interactional competence for the language learner, with a particular focus on turn-taking, sequencing, and repair. As shown above, while the learners are exposed to a limited range of turn sizes and timings, actions and stances, and repair practices, they have greater opportunities to (1) produce multi-unit turns and exercise a wider range of turn allocation techniques, (2) initiate sequences and receive extensive modeling of a specific set of actions and stances, and (3) engage in extensive practices of repair initiations. This is, in other words, a rather nuanced portrayal of AI's current ability to act as a competent conversation partner for the language learner.

Of particular note is the vast amount of talk space made available to the language learner in HAI, as shown in the production of multi-unit turns as well as the opportunities to initiate sequences and initiate repairs. Put otherwise, language learners really get to talk in HAI, and that is a huge advantage given the persistent challenges of promoting learner participation in the language classroom (e.g., Reddington, 2018). But perhaps equally importantly, as they enjoy the massive space to talk, are they getting heard? Are they getting heard when AI does not initiate repair on their talk, does not provide the repair they need, or does not provide any useful repair in response to their explicit solicitation? These “failings” in the realm of repair speak to the broader tendency in AI talk to, as noted above, favor progressivity over intersubjectivity. After all, repair is the fundamental mechanism for establishing intersubjectivity. Insofar as much of (language) teaching involves seeking and building intersubjectivity, we can perhaps safely say that the human teacher remains irreplaceable in that respect.

Regardless, AI (and ChatGPT in particular) appears to be a useful resource for developing language learners’ interactional competence despite its current limitations. It might, however, be a population-specific tool particularly useful for learners in the EFL or other resource-constrained environments with limited access to proficient speakers of English (or any other L1s). Under those circumstances, AI would provide an invaluable and cost-effective alternative. HAI might also be particularly useful for agentive learners with a basic command of the language as opposed to absolute beginners. Many of the HAI affordances, as observed earlier, involve the learner taking initiatives, and such initiatives, as one might argue, demand a basic set of linguistic resources and an adventurous spirit.

Equipped with this empirically based understanding of these AI (in)capabilities, language teachers may consider encouraging the use of AI as a supplement to their existing speaking curricula (cf., Jeon & Lee, 2023 on teacher-AI collaboration). For the more ambitiously minded, one exciting path forward is to train “experienced operators” of AI by encouraging learners to (1) take advantage of the vast amount of talk space, (2) push the limits of AI talk by demanding different responses than, for example, affiliative assessments, and (3) resist progressivity by vigilantly checking understanding and demanding listening.

In closing, I hope to have demonstrated the usefulness of conversation analysis in grounding our pedagogical appraisals of new technologies, and most importantly, provided some useful evidence for teachers to leverage ChatGPT in advancing their goal of developing learners’ interactional competence. With the fast pace of technological advancement, there is no doubt that AI’s capabilities are rapidly evolving, which makes it all the more important to continue our conversation on the affordances and constraints of AI in language education. Only with such persistent engagement can we hope to achieve the ultimate goal of maximizing our professional agility in this constantly changing world.

5. About the Author

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7. Declaration of AI Use

The authors declare that no AI tools were used in preparation of the manuscript. The authors take full responsibility for the content.

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